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CENTENNIAL

FITHIAN 'LLINOIS

1870 - 1970

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ILLINOIS HISTORICAL SURVEY

FITHIAN

The First Hundred Years 1870-1970

Written by
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Josephine Wathier Payne

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Ill. Historical
Survey

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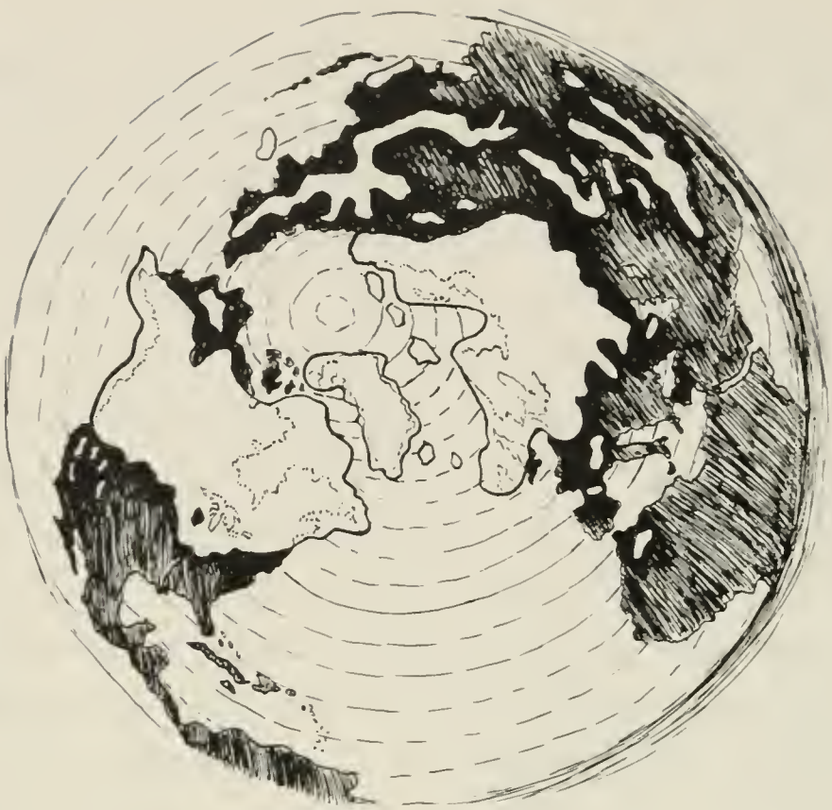
FOREWORD

The only conceivable way to justifiably credit all those who have contributed to these notes on our town would be to list all residents and former residents, living and dead, for the scrapbooks, family Bibles, newspaper clippings and conversational rememberances of the past involved, at one point or another, virtually everyone. For this pleasant but time-consuming task, a dedicated and hardworking group of persons on the committee deserve inordinate praise: Lorena Barnes, Denny and Marge King, Diane Lane, Ginger Wagers, Sandy O'Neill, Alan and Jody Payne, Tom and Cindy Perry, Ruth Sartain, Judy Stallings and Beth Cannon. Indeed, so voluminous has been the material gathered that selection became the major task. There are bound to be the disappointments of material generously given but partially or totally excluded from the final narrative. Worse, there are bound to be errors; the chairman assumes full responsibility. In addition to those, named and unnamed, who collected data, typed manuscript, sorted photos, made drawings, sold advertisements, dealt with the printer, etc. acknowledgement must be made to the writers, editors and publishers of many publications. Especial recognition is owed to *The Heritage of Vermilion County* for excerpts from articles gleaned over a good many years. The account of the very early years leans heavily upon such standard local sources as Beckwith, Jones, Person, and the Woodbury grandchildren of Amos Williams. In trying to avoid cumbersome footnotes, the attempt has been made hopefully with success to acknowledge in the text the sources being quoted.



I. The Prairie is Born

The story of Fithian is a story of the prairie, and like any story of the prairie it begins with ice, for the prairie was the gift of the glaciers. This rich, black soil, flat as a table-top, that drew our ancestors to it was not always the fertile prairie we know. About 25,000 years ago, the present site of Fithian was pretty rugged country. Streams and small rivers had cut sharply through the surface cleaving deep, steep-sided valleys. Arctic winds from the mountains of ice creeping slowly southward had killed most of the trees and other plants. It was a barren landscape. And finally the leading edge of the glacier ploughed through at the pondering rate of six or seven inches each day, until the county and then the state was buried under millions of tons of ice. Not only did it sweep the landscape clean like a vacuum cleaner, but it picked up in its frozen mass all the dead vegetation, hillocks of land, rocks and dead animals that stood in its path.

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Centuries later, as the climate warmed and the mountainous range of ice began to melt back, the leading edge retreated slowly from near Cairo, Illinois, over Vermilion County and back through Canada to the Arctic Circle. But as it receded, melting at fairly even rates, all the frozen debris was deposited like an unrolling carpet behind it. Occasionally, the rate would slow, and the edge would stay in one spot briefly. Then a low rill of land would build up as the material melted out. That happened just north of Fithian, and we see it today in a low and moderate ridge stretching west from Indiana through the Glenburn-Newton area into Champaign County, the Champaign Moraine.

In some places, the old, pre-glacial surface peaked up so high that the carpet of material laid down as the glacier retreated didn't quite cover it. That happened over a wide area just southwest of Fairmont and over much smaller areas near Conkeytown and other places along the Salt Fork. This old, pre-glacial material, much compacted by the weight of the ice, consolidated over the centuries into limestone and sandstone. In still other places, a rivulet of melting ice would carry with it finely-ground material, depositing lenses of sand and gravel on or beneath the smooth carpet. Near the surface and sometimes buried deep within it were thick layers of dead and decaying vegetation that, under tons of pressure, gradually became coal.

When the climate began to warm in the wake of the ice, wild grasses grew, so that soon the clean, flat carpet of prairie bore a deep pile of eight foot grass, whose roots held the water. Trees were rare, found only on the northern and eastern banks of streams. These streams, in spite of the small amounts of water reaching them through the maze of grass roots, widened and deepened over the centuries into rivers, cutting valleys and literally dividing the prairie into two parts. One part drained northward into the Great Lakes, and the other drained westward and southward through the Father of Waters into the Gulf of Mexico.

In the late summer and early fall, thunderstorms were frequent. And every year, in many different places across the thousand miles of waving grass, lightning would strike a fire in the tinder-dry chaff. And the wind, unchecked by trees, would drive before it a wall of

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fire twenty feet high. All varieties of animals fled in terror. This annual chastening by fire was what prevented trees from growing anywhere but along the north and east banks of streams. Since the prevailing winds in the late summer and early fall came from the southwest, any young trees sprouting on these banks were wiped out in the conflagration. The water channels gave scant protection to those on the opposite banks, but enough for a fortunate few to survive.

After centuries of these annual earth scorchers, a deep, black humus built up, two feet deep in most places, developing into the richest, most fertile soil on the face of the planet. The prairies were, indeed, the gift of the glaciers, but if they were born of ice, they were nurtured in fire.

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II. Man Discovers the Prairie

The Redmen came. They came over the Bering Strait, perhaps by land over a pre-existing bridge connecting Alaska and Siberia. Population pressures and the ranging habits of the buffalo lured them eastward. So impressed were they with the awesome spectacle of the annual prairie fires, and so essential was fire to their lives during the lethal prairie winters, that many tribes used terms referring to fire in their names. For example, they called the prairies, "Mas-ko-tia," or "place of fire." The Prairie Indians were known to the other Indians as Maskoutes or, in the term used by early French missionaries and trappers, Maskoutines, "People of the Fire Country." In the Algonquin tongue, as in the Ojibbeway (or Chippeway, as it is sometimes miscalled), "scoutay" means fire, and in the Illinois and Pottowatamie, "scotte'. or "scutay" means fire.

Largely because of the salt springs near the junction of the Middle Fork and Salt Fork Rivers, Vermilion County became a frequently

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used campground and, later, a more or less permanent home for a large community of the Miami or Mia-hama Confederacy. This was a very loose association of Piankeshaws, Weas, and Miamis, speaking the Miami tongue. Included also in the Miamis were the Illinois Nation, variously called the Linneway, the Lin-i-wek, and the Minneway. The term, Illini, in the Miami tongue meant, "a perfect and accomplished man." The name, Miami, survives in an adulterated version, as the name of a river having its origin near Ft. Wayne, Indiana, the Maumee. Another Miami term meaning "white", Oua-bous-kigon, became first Wah-pe-sha, and then Wabash. O-io, meaning "beautiful", became Ohio.

The Illinois Nation, part of the Miami Confederacy, embraced five tribes: the Michiganians or Metchigamis, the Kaskaskias, the Cahokias, the Temarois or Tamaroas and the Peorias. By the time the French missionaries and trappers came to the prairies in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the Illinois were declining in power. War was being waged against them on the west by the Sioux, on the east by the Iroquois and on the north by the Sac or Sauk, the Fox and others including the Kickapoos and the Pottawatomies. So when the first white settlers came to Illinois, the Illini had been succeeded by these later tribes and others such as the Winnebagos and the Shawnee.

In those early days when the total human population (all Indian) of what became Vermilion County was less than one person per square mile (that is to say, fewer than one thousand persons in the roughly one thousand square miles of prairie), in those early days the prairie teemed with non-human life. In the spring it blossomed with blue-eyed grass, pucoon, shooting stars, prairie phlox, Turk's-cap lily, coreopsis and Big Blustem (or "Turkey-foot") which grew nine feet tall. And in this handsome covering there thrived enormous numbers of jackrabbits, prairie dogs, burrowing owls, black-footed ferrets, badgers, coyotes, prairie chickens, pocket gophers, buffalo and many other species long since driven away, some to extinction. The sky above the verdant prairie of Vermilion County was one small leg of a vast aerial highway, the "Mississippi flyway" for tens of thousands of migrating birds. Every spring and fall these feathered gypsies made brief overnight visits to their local cousins: avocets, Eskimo curlews,

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snipe, woodcock, ducks, geese, trumpeter swans, hawks (including the Peregrine Falcon or duck hawk) and eagles.

Lottie Jones, in her excellent book, *Decisive Dates in Illinois History,* 1909, lists six dates marking major events that were of prime importance in shaping Illinois history. In 1673 the French discovered and occupied the Illinois Country. This was of extreme importance, for the Spanish, Dutch and English explorers were heavily occupied elsewhere, and would not have probed here for at least another century. It was left, by default, to the French.

In 1759 the Indians from the Illinois Country agreed to a compact already existing between the Iroquois and the English. The English had inherited this compact from the Dutch. In effect, the compact withdrew Indian support from the French and insured the supremacy of the Anglo-Saxon over the Gaul in the New World. The Indians referred to their signing of the compact as "being bound by the Silver Covenant Chain."

In 1778 George Rogers Clark conquered the Northwest by capturing Kaskaskia and St. Vincent in the Illinois Country from the French insuring Great Britain domination not just to the Ohio River on the north but clear to the Great Lakes.

When Illinois was petitioning to become a state in 1818, Nathaniel Pope was instrumental in getting the northern boundary extended fifty miles into the Wisconsin Territory, thus securing a Lake MIchigan port. We owe to him not only the city of Chicago but the fourteen counties so created–fourteen counties which dominated state politics and even decided national affairs in 1860.

In the years before the Civil War when the slavery issue was being heatedly debated throughout the nation, a strong attempt was made in Illinois to hold a convention to amend the state constitution to allow slavery, but that was defeated in 1824, thus insuring that Illinois would remain a free state and determining its later role with the Union rather than the Confederacy.

The Lincoln-Douglas debates of 1858 focused national attention on the state and crystallized the rapidly and emotionally polarizing attitudes on slavery.

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III. White Men Find the Prairie

As early as 1699 a party of French settlers passed down the Wabash on their way to Louisiana from Canada, and in 1718 a young French officer described the Piankeshaw village located on the Vermilion River, which was probably the present site of Danville. In 1751 four English traders were captured by the French at this village and sent as prisoners to Canada. In 1752 the Piankeshaws killed five Frenchmen on Christmas Day in retalation for the killing some time before of four men of their tribe who were on their way to fight the Chickashaws. When a party of French from Fort Ouitanon went to recover the belongings of these traders they found the Piankeshaws under the chief, "Old Briton," had decamped to take up their residence with their relatives, the Miamis, at Picakiwillany, Ohio, where "Old Briton" was afterward killed in a surprise attack by the French and Indians and his body cooked and eaten by the victors. His son, Little Turtle, a "native" of Vermilion County, afterward

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became a noted chief of the Miamis. A Catholic missionary, Father Justinian de la Richaride, was located in Vermilion County at the time. The exact date of his coming is not known, but it was prior to 1750. He died in 1758. Fort Chartres at Kaskaskia was built in 1718 and as the trail from there to Detroit entered Vermilion County near Sidell, crossing the Vermilion at the site of Danville, it is likely that many Frenchmen passed through this area ahead of Col. George Croghan in 1765, who is cited by some authorities as the first white man to cross the country.

Vermilion County, so far as white men were concerned, was originally a part of New France. Together with all the immense territory lying west of the Alleghanies and north of the Ohio, it belonged, by right of discovery and occupation, to the King of France from the year 1682 to 1763. During this period, the county seat for the northern portion of the county ("Canada", that is, northwest of the junction of the Wabash and Vermilion Rivers) was Detroit. For the southern portion ("Louisiana"), it was Fort Chartres. At the conclusion of the French colonial war in 1763 the territory east of the Mississippi and west of the Alleghanies was ceded to Great Britian. But in 1778, by the capture of Kaskaskia by Gen. George Rogers Clark, Vermilion became a part of "Illinois County" in the State of Virginia. Afterward, Vermilion became a part of the Northwest Territory, ceded to the U.S. in 1787. From being a part of the Indiana Territory in 1800, to the Illinois Territory in 1809, to the *State* of Illinois in 1819, the county became variously incorporated in a number of successive counties including Knox, St. Clair, Crawford, Clark and Edgar. It was when this area was a part of Clark County that the first permanent settlement by white men was begun within the present limits of Vermilion County.

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IV. White Men Settle in Vermilion County

It was *fur* and *salt* that first attracted white people's attention to the region. In 1819 a group of white explorers came up the Vermilion River from the Wabash hoping to find salt. One member of the party, Joseph Barron, had been at the "Vermilion Salines" in 1801. He was successful in leading his party back to them on September 22, 1819. With him were Lambert Bana, Zachariah Cicott (or Shecott, as it was pronounced), Truman Blackman, and four *Shawnee* Indians whom Barron had hired and paid to go with him and show him minerals, salt springs, etc.

Conflicting claims arose directly after they returned, and, unknown to Barron, Capt. Blackman organized a second expedition with himself, his brother–Remember Blackman–George Beckwith, Seymour Treat, Peter Allen and Francis Whitcomb.

The following account is taken from Hiram W. Beckwith's *History of Vermilion County, Illinois*, 1879, the earliest and most thorough

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source. "They crossed the Wabash at the mouth of Otter Creek in the latter part of October, and struck out in a northwest course through the timber and prairies, keeping the direction with a small pocket compass, until they arrived at a stream supposed to be the Big Vermilion, about twenty-five miles, as they inferred, from the Wabash River. Here they encamped on the 31st of October, 1819. Capt. Blackman pointed out a smooth spot of low ground from twenty to thirty rods across where he said there was salt water. There was no vegetation there, "except,"—says Peter Allen in his affidavit,—"in some few places where the Indians had sunk curbs of bark into the soil for the purpose of procuring salt water."

"Capt. Blackman set two or three men to work with spades, and by digging two or three feet into the saturated soil saline water was procured. This was boiled down in a kettle brought along for that purpose. About two gallons of water yielded four ounces of good clear salt. An experimental well was dug a few rods from the former, where the brine was much stronger. It was agreed by Capt. Blackman that Treat, Whitcomb and Beckwith should be partners in the discovery of the salt water, and each pay his portion of the expenses. Beckwith and Whitcomb were left in charge to hold possession against the intrusion of other explorers, and to go on developing the saline water, while the others returned to Fort Harrison and procured a team, tools and provisions, with a view to future operations. In the latter part of November, 1819, Treat returned, coming up the Wabash and Vermilion rivers in a pirogue, with tools, provisions, his wife and children. With the assistance of Beckwith and Whitcomb—both good axmen—a cabin was quickly erected and Treat's family took immediate possession. In this way and at this place began the first permanent settlement within the present limits of Vermilion County. Mr. Treat's family suffered all the privations incident to their situation. Their nearest neighbors were on North Arm Prairie, some forty miles away. The old Kickapoo town, a mile below their cabin, was deserted. The fence enclosing the cornfield had tumbled to the ground. Weeds rankled where formerly the Indian squaw had hoed her corn and cultivated her squashes. A year later, Treat, writing to the governor, says "that his family had remained on the ground ever since their arrival, except one who has fallen a victim to

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Champaign, Illinois

the sufferings and privations which they have had to endure in a situation so remote from a settled country, without the means of procuring the ordinary comforts of life."

"Capt. Blackman, it seems, did not do as he agreed. Instead of making an application to the governor in the name of Barron and the other parties interested, he took the lease, or permit, in his own name. The other parties complained and presented their own claims to the governor, in numerous affidavits and letters, and it was some three years before the difficulties were finally adjusted. In the meantime several wells were sunk, one of them by Beckwith and Whitcomb at their own expense, to the depth of fifty feet, mostly by drilling through solid rock. The salt was excellent in quality, purity, and strength. Great expectations were raised as to the benefit that would accrue to the people of the Wabash Valley from these salt works. . . .On the 13th of December, 1822, the conflicting claimants, or assignees of them, settled their differences at Vandalia before Gov. Bond, in an agreement which defined the shares of each. During this and the following year, the manufacture of salt was increased. Nothing, however, was done on a scale equal to the demands until in 1824, and after John W. Vance obtained possession of the salines. In the spring of 1824 Vance brought twenty-four large iron kettles from Louisville, in a *batau,* down the Ohio, up the Wabash and Vermilion to the mouth of Stony Creek, about four miles southeast of Danville. The water being too low and the channel obstructed by a sandbar at the mouth of the creek, the boat was abandoned, and the kettles hauled from thence to the salt works by ox teams. Soon after this the numbers of kettles was increased to eighty, holding a hundred and forty gallons each. They were set in a double row in a furnace constructed of stone at the bench of the hill near the wells. A hundred gallons of brine was required to make a bushel of salt, and from sixty to eighty bushels was a good week's run. The salt sold readily at the works for from $1.25 to $1.50 per bushel. Much of it was taken down the river in pirogues to supply the country below. A great deal was taken away in wagons, and much of it in sacks on horseback by persons who were too poor to own a team. It was not an unusual occurrence to see people at the "works" from the settlements at Buffalo, Hart and Elkhart Groves, from the Sangamon

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and Illinois Rivers, and from the neighborhood of Rockville and Rosedale, Indiana. In those days, says Mr. H. A. Coffeen, in an excellent little volume issued by him in 1870, and which is the pioneer history of our country, "the motto seemed to be more wagon roads to the salt works."

"The discovery of enormous quantities of brine upon the Kanawha River, and the completion of a government pier at the mouth of the Chicago Creek, making a practical harbor so that vessels on the lake could safely enter there, created a competition that put an end to the further manufacture of salt in Vermilion County. The works after this were a loss to everyone who undertook to run them. They were abandoned, and the long row of buildings that had grown up in palmier days became vacant. For many years afterward the sole occupant was a singular old lady whom the people called "Mother Bloss." She lived all alone, spending her time in knitting or in boiling a little salt at the old furnace when the weather was pleasant, and would bring the products of her industry to town and barter them for sugar, coffee, snuff, and such other little luxuries as her limited means would allow."

"The Indians told Maj. Vance that they and the French traders had made salt at these springs for at least seventy or eighty years before they were developed by the white people; and the old Indians said they had no recollection of the time, it was so long ago since their people first commenced making salt there. The well-worn trails of buffalo and other wild animals were found converging to this brakish ooze from many directions, and the abundance of game that collected there to eat the salty earth is proven by the quantity of broken arrowheads which have been found in this locality ever since the settlement of the country.

"The salt works were the nucleus of settlements in that vicinity, as they were, also, the beginning of the county. The next beginning, in the order of time, was made in 1820, by James D. Butler, who "took up a claim," as squatting on a piece of land before it was surveyed or put in market was called, just west of Catlin. . . . When Butler's family moved in, their nearest neighbor south was Henry Johnson, on the Little Vermilion, while Treat's family, at the salt works, with

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Whitcomb and the two Beckwiths, Dan and George, were their only neighbors in that direction. Within two or three years Robert Trickle came to Butler's Point, then John Light, and soon after Asa Elliott. Whitcomb took a wife and went from the salt works to Catlin, where he built a home and lived for many years. . . .

"A Lewis Bailey, in 1823, made a "tomahawk improvement," as little clearings in the timber were called in those days, west of the salt works some six miles, on what is now (1879) known as a part of the old Radcliffe farm. Bailey sold out to Harvey Luddington, who was well known in Danville, where he lived since 1828 until his death (in 1879). The branch nearby became known to the early settlers as Luddington's branch. It is now called Stony Creek. Within a few years afterward a Mr. Walker opened a farm higher up the creek, and the place became known as "Walker's Point." . . .

"After Baily (sic) sold out to Luddington he cleared out to the "Illinois River country," leaving his wife and two or three small children at the salt works. The children were taken sick, The wife soon became ill, too. There was no other woman at the salt works, the men laboring there being all unmarried. Whitcomb took care of the sick mother and her children. With his own hands he did all their washing. No female help could be had. No doctors or drug stores, from where aid or medicines could be procured, were nigh. No food, such as invalids require, could be procured. One by one the children, wasting away, day after day, died. No plank or lumber was to be had, and coffins were made out of rough boards, split from a walnut tree that grew a short distance from Butler's branch. In these rude caskets, roughly made by the men with such tools as they possessed, the bodies of the little ones were placed in the ground. The sick mother, unable to leave her couch, could drop no tear at the graves of her dear ones. There were none to mourn at the funeral,—no relatives, no friends, no minister,—only the sad faces of strong men inured to hardships, who silently performed the last rites.

"The walnut tree . . . was called the "coffin tree." Neighbors came from a long distance and rived boards from this tree. It was straight-grained, and slabs could be split off of it with little difficulty. From such material as this were formed the burial-cases of

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Danville, Illinois

a number of the early settlers."

Few of us today can imagine the threats posed by nature, so insulated from them have we become. There were many floods, droughts, sudden freezings, sudden thaws, windstorms, fevers, scarcity of materials. There were also biological hazards, especially rattlesnakes, copperheads, cotton-mouth moccasins, mosquitoes, flies, especially large green flies which drove horses into frenzy, blow-flies, and numerous other nuisances. And virtually forgotten is the enormous debt our forefathers owed to the lowly hog. Without the hog and its immunity to poisonous snakes, it is even possible the prairie might not have been settled, at least as soon as it was, because of the innumerable poisonous reptiles.

The Woodbury grandchildren of Amos Williams, first postmaster of Danville, give the following account in their history of those early days. "The Indians called the rattlesnake their *"grandfather,"* and through superstition would never permit one to be harmed or destroyed. Hence their numbers multiplied rapidly in localities favorable for their protection and increase; and the incoming whites were annoyed, and often frightened, with familiar liberties they would take in and about the houses." One or two incidents will illustrate. "Mr. Cunningham and John Murphy occupied log cabins near together on the west side of Vermilion Street, south of the public square. One evening subsequent to 1830, Samuel Russel was down their courting the girls. As he was being lighted out, the taper which the young lady held in her hand reflected upon the shining skin of a rattlesnake coiled up on the doorstep at his feet. . . . Mr. Gustavus Pierson . . . many years ago . . . in company with his mother and brother, was spending the evening at the house of (friends), and among the other incidents related (by their hostess) was one to the effect that one evening, after dusk, she went out to the wood-pile, and gathered up with her hands an apron full of fagots, which she brought into the house, and emptied upon the fire by dropping the folds of her apron. Immediately a rattlesnake, over two feet long, which he had thrown into the fire along with the fagots, crawled out from the flames."

"The Blackmans and Treat brought up a lot of hogs from Terre

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321 E. North
Danville, Illinois

Haute to the salt works in 1820 or 1821, and turned them loose in the woods, where they throve and multiplied astonishingly. The animals lived upon grass and the abundance of *mast* (nuts, especially beechnuts and acorns) found in the timber. In time the hogs grew wild, and the males were dangerous. They spread their numbers many miles up the Middle Fork and Salt Fork, and down the Vermilion below Danville, The round, plump form, the result of domestication, gave way as the animals bred back to a wild condition, and their bodies became tall and thin, their legs long, and their whole appearance grew so changed that they looked very little like civilized hogs. They became common property in the woods, and were killed off as wild game."

James D.. Butler ". . .in 1823 made the first mill, or "*corn cracker,*" ever used either in Vermilion or Champaign counties. It consisted of a "gum," or section of a hollow tree, some four feet long by two feet in diameter. Into this was set a stationary stone, selected with reference to as flat a surface as could be procured. The revolving burr, like the stationary stone, consisted of a granite boulder, (the likes of which could be found everywhere). The stones were broken and dressed into a circular form, and the grinding surfaces were furrowed, so as to give them cutting edges, by Mr. Butler, with the aid of such tools as he could manufacture at his forge for the purpose. A hole was drilled on the upper side of the rotary burr, near the rim. A pole was inserted in this, and the other end placed into a hole in a beam some six or eight feet directly above the center of the hopper. By taking hold of the pole with the hand near the burr, and exerting a "push and pull" movement, a rotary motion was given to the mill. Its capacity, with a lively, muscular man as the motive power, was about one bushel of tolerably well cracked corn per hour. The corn was put into the gum with one hand, while the burr was revolved with the other. . . . It served the wants of the settlement at Butler's Point until the water-mill was built on the north fork at Danville. Afterward it was taken to the "Big Grove," in Champaign county, by Mr. Trickle, where it did work for the whole neighborhood, then consisting of five or six

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families, among whom it sustained its reputation as a good and reliable mill. During the time this machine was the only "first-class mill" in the county, the nearest place where flour and good meal could be procured was from the water-mill on Raccoon Creek, across the Wabash, below Montezuma."

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Danville, Illinois

V. Early Settlements in Oakwood Township

"The early settlements in this township take the lead of anything in the county, both in regard to priority of settlement, and their importance in the subsequent growth of the county and although these pioneer efforts were of such importance in the development of the wealth of this country, the particulars have faded away until accuracy is almost impossible in many cases. (And this was written in 1879!) The early settlement at the old Major Vance salt works, the first in the township, is fully discussed (above, as are Harvey Luddington's, Lewis Bailey's and Mr. Walker's on Stony Creek.).

"The settlements along the Salt Fork, on the south side of the township, were early begun, and here we find the principal population for some time. The exact date for many of these settlements cannot now (1879) be ascertained. It is quite probable that the next family that came in here after those already mentioned was that of the man who built the old water-mill on the Salt Fork where the present steam and water mill is located. This mill was in

Compliments of
Gary and Marsha Cromwell

operation as early as 1826; how long it had been running previously we are not quite sure. At this date Mr. Nathaniel Mead traveled over the country, and the only inhabitants that he remembers were those at this mill, and John Vance, at the salt works. Mr. Mead is, perhaps, the oldest person living (in 1879) in Oakwood Township who saw this country as early as 1826; in fact, we doubt whether another grown person was here in 1826 and is here now. At that time he was twenty-six years old, having been born in the gray dawn of the nineteenth century. He is from the land of "steady habits," having first seen the light of day seven miles from Hartford, Connecticut. He remained there till he was eighteen years old. His youthful days were spent in the dairy. On his westernbound trip he first stopped at Cincinnati. After a stay here we find him next in Union county, Indiana. Although he came here as early as 1826, "prospecting," he did not permanently locate his family in this county until 1835. At this time he bought land near the site of Conkey Town. Excepting a short stay in Covington, Indiana, he has remained in this township ever since. He has reared a family of children. His sons are well-to-do, important elements in society, and he still lingers on the shores of time, two miles southwest of Oakwood station, enjoying the fruits of seventy-nine years' toil among the children of men. He remembers well the war of 1812, and the rejoicing at its close. During his recollection not only Oakwood township and Vermilion county have been developed from their native wildness to a populous, well-organized community, but industries have sprung up all over the nation. He was seven years old when Robert Fulton made that wonderful experiment on the Hudson; when Lafayette made his wonderful passage through this country he had reached the age of full manhood; when the first car carried its load of stone from Quincy quarries, he was verging on the period of middle-life; as Queen Victoria ascended the throne, he was growing old. If all the progress of art and science, which has been made within the memory of such men as he, was written in a book, the world could scarcely contain it. The progress in itself is not so startling as the fact that one man's experience has embraced it all.

"In following up the settlement after the arrival of the miller on Salt Fork, we are at a loss to trace its progress. William Smith opened

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Sprinkmann Insulation
Peoria, Illinois

the farm now (1979) occupied by J. R. Thompson, as early as 1830. Smith was an important man in the early settlement of that neighborhood, but no trace of his descendants is to be found there now. In the same neighborhood, and probably earlier in point of time, was a Mr. Lander. Then, too, we hear of Mr. Shearer in this neighborhood at a very early date. Among the early settlers in this part, Mr. Pogue was farther west; he was near the county line. Down along the creek was Mr. Brewer, and close to the present site of Conkey Town was Stephen Crane. Thomas W. and John Q. Deakin came in 1835. They lived in this same neighborhood, just on the south line of the township. They were important elements in the early settlement of the neighborhood on the Salt Fork. On the west side of Stony Creek, Mr. Wright probably followed Mr. Walker. In 1832 Mr. Aaron Dalbey followed the opening made here, and came over from the south side of the Salt Fork, and began a farm one mile south of the present site of Muncie. Mr. Dalbey was a millwright, and rendered important service to the community in building the second mill on Salt Fork. Mr. Shepherd was the proprietor, but Mr. Dalbey was the architect and builder. Mr. Dalbey remained here till his death. His widow married John McFarland, and still (1879) resides on the original farm. The farm is a good one, and under the careful management of Mr. McFarland has reached the highest state of cultivation. A little farther north, up Stony Creek, we find John McCarty, about 1836. He settled just above Muncie. Beyond him, and later, came Harrison and Seneca Stearns. They came to the country, young men, though married, in 1836, and have remained in the edge of the timber ever since. In mentioning the early settlers, we could not forget John Shepherd, who came in 1836, and engaged in the milling enterprise, but who died before he saw his work fully completed. These are the principal early settlers in the southwestern part of the township. No doubt there were others that came early, but they soon moved away. Of those who came later, such men as Havard and Cast, that came in 1838, would now be considered old settlers."

"In 1829 William Craig entered the land on which he now (1879) lives, at Palestine, Illinois. At this time the land office was located

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Dolbee Lumber Company
Harold Dolbee & Sons
Oakwood, Illinois RR1

there. In 1830 he came to the place to improve it; he was a single man then, being about twenty-two years old. His brother came with him and they worked together. After one season of toil and hardship William concluded that it was too big a job for a single team, so he set out to find some susceptible damsel with whom he might link forces. According to his own account he found the search a tedious one, for it was not until 1836 that he led his blushing bride to the altar and beguiled her into a trip to the far west. The story of Mr. Craig's bridal tour has been so often told, and the particulars of his early settlement here have been so thoroughly bruited abroad, that it is not necessary to repeat them here. Suffice it to say that after a life of excessive toil and hardship, during which he has amassed a considerable quantity of property, Mr. Craig finds himself (in 1879) surrounded by his nine children, none of whom, in all probability, will ever realize the conditions from which their prosperity sprang, and himself still able to enjoy life and its blessings." (Beckwith, p.840)

Virtually all the settlements discussed thus far have been on the banks of or very near to streams and rivers. The early settlers avoided the open prairie as the least desirable land to work. And they had some excellent reasons. First, the water routes were the primary, and certainly the cheapest, channels of transportation. Second, the need for timber to build cabins and to fuel the fires of hearth and forge was crucial. Third, the prairie was a vast swampland, completely underwater during the spring rains, overgrown with eight-foot high grass in the summer, an extremely dangerous fire hazard in the fall, and it left one mercilessly vulnerable in the winter to blizzards howling unchecked for miles across the open range. But fourth, and perhaps more important than all the others, to these pioneers it seemed obvious that land incapable of growing trees could never be relied on to grow corn, wheat or oats.

"The great prairie . . . was the dread of the early settler when he became benighted on his return from Chicago . . . (or Springfield, or other distant city) . . . The dark, stormy wintry nights carried terror to many a household when it was feared that the father or husband or son was trying to find his way home over the treeless waste of the

Compliments of
Raaum's Standard Service
Route 150 - Oakwood Road
Oakwood, Illinois

great divide.

"A single incident of such tragic nature as to be told over and over again at every fireside in the west forty years ago (i.e., ca. 1840) (which the writer well remembers to have frequently heard told when the wintry winds were whistling their threats at the few obstructions which the early settlers had erected against their unobstructed sweep), will serve to show the terrors which in those days were consequent upon winter travel. In December, 1836, on a mild warm day in which rain and snow mingled until the ground was covered with slush, and everything which travelers wore was wet through, the thermometer ranging above forty degrees, two travelers, Frame and Hildreth, were making their way back toward the settlements on the Vermilion, and, just after night overtook them, when not far from where Hoopeston now stands, the "sudden change" so often alluded to by old settlers struck them. The weather, from ranging above freezing, suddenly dropped to twenty degrees below zero, accompanied by a wind which was severe enough to freeze every article of wet clothing in an instant. The ground, full of water, became frozen in a very few minutes, and no man could stand it for even a short time on horseback. The men walked for a while, until they became numb and lost. To be lost on this great prairie at any time, and under any circumstances of weather, is one of the most painful conditions, mentally, one can be placed in; but lost in a storm, conscious that one is gradually and surely becoming less and less able every moment to care for himself, is as near like enduring the torments of the damned as one can well imagine. On, on they went, vainly hoping to reach some place where they might at least be protected from the fearful blasts. They had given up the hope of getting what King James asked in somewhat similar circumstances—"rest and a guide, and food and fire"; but they still hoped to find the friendly shelter of Bicknell's Point (near Rossville). But finally that hope also abandoned them, and, with almost the certainty of death, they decided to kill their horses and disembowel them, hoping that the friendly shelter of the stiffening carcass and the warmth of the animal heat might save them from certain death. Unreasonable as their hope seems, they actually carried their plan into partial

Compliments of
Larry Cannon's Barber Shop
Your Recorder of Deeds
Oakwood, Illinois

execution, by killing one of the horses, and pushing him over as he fell so that the back would lie toward the west, and protect them in a measure from the terrible blast. The other horse for some reason was not killed, and the two half-frozen men made themselves as comfortable as possible in the shelter which they had thus prepared. In the morning Frame was dead, and Mr. Hildreth was so badly frozen that he suffered partial amputation. He died in Carroll township some three years since (i.e., 1876), living to see almost forty anniversaries of that dreadful night."

"Mr. William Parris claims to be the first man that ventured out into the prairie in Oakwood township. He moved from the state road, where he had been since 1834, to the edge of the prairie northwest of Muncie in 1842. He then went farther out and moved a house into the prairie where J. M. Havard now lives." (In 1879, when this was written,J. M. Havard lived one mile north, one-half mile west and another one-quarter mile north of Muncie, the land now farmed by Corky Shepherd. Mr. Parris wasn't being all that venturesome, even so, for at the time the timber along Stony Creek extended for a half mile either side of the creek and north to the road one mile north of Muncie. He was only one-quarter mile from the edge of the timber.) "This house was brought all the way from Salt Fork and put up where it still stands, in 1844—thirty-five years ago. But this was only a short distance from the timber. At that time, even, large tracts of land lay unoccupied and almost unfrequented within the present limits of Oakwood township; all the western part of the township was open and much of it afterward sold at very low figures: such as was denominated swamp land was sold as low as twelve and a half cents per acre. The first to settle in the prairie northwest of where the village of Fithian now is, was James H. Black. His residence was beyond the settlements entirely; he was deemed crazy, almost. The first settlers had thought that if they secured the prairie adjoining the timber no one would ever go beyond them, and they would thus have perpetual range on the prairie. Mr. Black made his home where he now lives in 1856; (i.e., one and one-half miles north of Route 150 and one-half mile west of Route 49, half of which is now owned by William G. Myers, Jr., and half of which is owned by Laura M.

Compliments of
Virgil & Nellie Haynes
Marathon Station - July 15, 1957

Lumax) here he bought two hundred and forty acres of land and improved it. At about this same time William M. Rutledge came to the prairie where he now lives, in the northwest corner of Oakwood township. (This was four miles north of Route 150 and two miles west of Route 49.) He, too, has remained where his homeplace is for twenty-three years; he owns just one half section there. He is a son of the early settler, A. W. Rutledge, who located southeast of New Town in 1832. These pioneers of the prairie have enjoyed a remarkable degree of good luck. They bought their land for a trifle; they were not under the necessity of clearing it before they could cultivate. They were not compelled to fence for some time, and all they required to become independent was a determination to stay right there. Their land has increased in value more than tenfold in many cases, and what could have been bought for a few hundreds then is worth as many thousands now.

"In following up Stony Creek the early settlers began to get out into the prairie somewhat. At the "Crab Apple Grove" (where the present Fithian slab pavement crosses Stony Creek) we find Joseph L. Shepherd, in 1849. He bought land there, and has remained near the same place ever since. A little farther up, and more decidedly in the prairie, we find James Gorman as early as 1853. (One-half mile east of the present job in the Fithian slab pavement, on the north side of the road). From about this time the active occupation of the prairie may be dated. When we look over this broad area of productive farmland, and see the immense crops of corn, oats, wheat and potatoes that are annually produced, and the herds of cattle and droves of hogs that go to feed the hungry multitudes of our large cities, and then remember that twenty-five years ago all of this was unknown; that croaking frogs and creeping serpents occupied these rich fields, the progress of a quarter century provokes our wonder as well as challenges our admiration."

Still quoting from H. W. Beckwith (1879), "Some years ago there was quite a cluster of houses, and a lively business was done, at what was called Conkey Town. At present it is difficult to find much of the place, but we can find where it was. Here is an instance of the influence that a railroad has on a small country village when it passes

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Stallings Motor Co.
"Your Ford Dealer"
Fithian, Illinois

to one side a short distance. We have no record of any survey, or any laying off into a town; but O. M. Conkey came here about 1851, and operated a general country store. He came from Eugene, Indiana. A Mr. Denman set up a blacksmith shop, and Mr. Conkey got a post-office. Conkey sold out to Rowe and Beatty, and they sold to Mattocks and Maters Brothers. These men finally closed out about the time that the I. B. & W. came through. There was also another man, who kept a grocery, beer, etc.; but he, too, closed out and moved away. The first ideas of trade in this part of the country were entertained by Mr. Rhodes Smith. He began business on the State Road, just down close to Stony Creek, at quite an early day. Why he quit we did not learn, but suppose that this suggested the idea of Conkey Town, as well as the fact of a successful mill which had been operating from the earliest days. During the palmiest days of this little village Dr. Wilkins was their physician. He has left the reputation of being a good practitioner, and an upright man. But its days are over. The place reminds one of Goldsmith's words as he sings of the deserted village. W. R. Jones now owns the site of the village. He has a farm of two hundred acres here, and that includes the town." (p. 854)

According to an 1867 plat of the county, W. R. Jones owned this land even then, so, except for the mill and six or seven houses, the community cannot have thrived for more than about sixteen years (1851 to 1867), but in its heyday, it boasted a school, a blacksmith shop, two saloons, the mill and Conkey's store. Dr. William Fellows, father of Captain William Fellows who was killed in the battle of Kenesaw Mountain, was the village doctor, and his brother George, father of Mrs. Jessie R. Fithian, was the village school master. Mrs. Fithian's memories are a prime source for many of the details of the Conkey Town story, as she recalled them in an article in the Summer, 1968, issue of *The Heritage of Vermilion County.*

"Much of the activity of the village centered around Conkey's store, which in addition to being a general store was also the post office. The mail was brought on horseback from Fairmount every Saturday. That day was a gala occasion in town as farm families for miles around came to pick up their mail and shop at Conkey's store.

Compliments of
Wright's Flower Shop and Greenhouse
1200 Warrington Ave.
Danville, Illinois

"Just how well known this store was is illustrated by a story told me by a young lady. When the war broke out and all the young men were enlisting, she carried on quite an extensive correspondence with the neighborhood boys, one of whom always addressed his letters to her to "Conkey Store, Ver. Co. Ill." and she always received them.

Conkeytown Bridge

"The covered bridge and the mill beside it played a large part in the social and economic life of the community. This bridge was the only one spanning the river between Homer and Danville; consequently it was in constant use.

"This was a favorite rendezvous of the boys and girls of the country-side. When out buggy riding on Sunday afternoon, they just seemed to congregate at the bridge, where they whiled away the hours of a lazy afternoon.

"Sometimes we hiked up the trail to the dam and mill pond. This pond impounded the water and released it into the mill race until the water was of sufficient depth to turn the big wheel at the mill, which in turn supplied the power for grinding.

Compliments of
Mr. & Mrs. Wm. Cushwa & family

"In winter the mill pond made an excellent skating rink and was the scene of many skating parties with a huge bonfire to warm tingling fingers and toes.

"The mill was also a favorite gathering place for men; winter afternoons the mill office would be filled with men discussing the events of the day, and with the war clouds looming ominously on the horizon there was plenty to discuss.

"When the storm burst in all its fury it brought a belt-tightening such as even they had not known, as everything possible must go to the army. Our neighbor was fond of telling how, because wheat was in great demand, his father sowed most of his farm in wheat while he and his family ate corn bread and buck wheat pancakes three times a day.

"My husband's mother often talked of the austerity of life in those days. Sugar was unknown, the housewives using honey and molasses for sweetening. Coffee, too, was taboo; the people drank an ersatz coffee composed of different grains ground together. The family drank this brew for six days, but her father, who loved his coffee, insisted that on Sunday morning they have real coffee for breakfast.

"They had a real stake in the war as four of their six sons were bearing arms. Three of my mother's four brothers were in the army also. As a matter of fact, her oldest brother responded to President Lincoln's first call for 75 thousand volunteers and served for the duration. My father, too, took his part in the conflict, being a member of the 14th Illinois Volunteer Regiment. Serving under General Sherman, he was one of those who made the historic march from Atlanta to the Sea.

"The coming of the railroad through the country and the platting of the towns of Muncie and Fithian, brought to an end a colorful era in the history of Vermilion County. Also it sounded the death knell of Conkeytown as the villagers drifted away to the new towns. Today scarcely a trace remains of that once prosperous town. Gone is the covered bridge and the mill beside it. Gone, too, is Conkey's store; gone, too, the men and women who made up the community."

"The oldest wagon-road in this township, or anywhere in the

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L. L. Lenover, Sales & Service
806 Warrington Ave.
Danville, Illinois

western part of the county, is the old State Road, which dates back to pioneer days. It runs obliquely through the south part of the township, passing out at the south side about two and one-half miles from the county line. On this road the early settlements on the south and west side of the township were made. It is still (1879) much traveled. There were roads along the timber in various places at quite remote dates, but we found it impossible to trace their origin. At present nearly every section line in the township is a laid-out road, while there are many that do not follow lines. The level character of the country makes it necessary that these be either graded or drained. In some places we find thoroughfares that must be well nigh impassable in rainy weather, but generally the roads are in good condition. This is more especially true of those that lead east to Danville, and there are several."

There are some indications that, before the village grew up around the old mill at Conkey Town, an earlier community existed where the old State Road crosses Stony Creek and, perhaps, along Stony Creek to its junction with the Salt Fork. For example, that is where Rhodes Smith opened his First store, and that is where the first bank in the township was located (". . .about three miles southeast of Oakwood Station.") Further, in 1867 a road paralleling Stony Creek on its east bank connected the old State Road with the Salt Fork. Traces of it may still be found in 1970 through fields and along hedge rows, the north end of it commencing just west of Thee Dearth's house and the south end emerging from the timber just north of George Decker's house.

As much as life has changed within the living memory of present residents of Oakwood Township in 1970, the imagination boggles at trying to conceive what life was like without even the gadgets and appliances of eighty or ninety years ago. Try to picture, for example, what it was like trying to cook in 1830 or 1840 without even the now-antique cast iron cooking range. Fortunately, there survives an excellent description of what that was like in the form of a letter to old Vermilion county friends or relatives by a couple who had just purchased their first cook stove. The letter was written November 20, 1833, in "Lower Alton" by A. L. and Charlotte Risley to their

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Danville Tent & Awning Co.
219 W. Main St.
Danville, Illinois

old friends, Amos and Martha Williams, in Danville:

"Dear friends, through mercy we enjoy tolerably good health, after some dificulty we obtained a house in this town, where we will, probably stay until spring, and then we shall try to get a house in midle or upJer Town. We have obtained one of Stanly's rotary Cooking Stoves, as we wished to save the ecspence of burning much wood as it sells for two dollars a cord here. We have found this stove to be a great convenience in cooking as it has connected with it every aparatus required in cooking as you have not seen any stoves of this description I will give you a brief description of it, accompanied with a small book of directions. The one we purchased is what is called the 4 boiler stove. in the largest boiler water is het for washing and other purposes in the 2nd boiler which is composed of a tin boiler and steamer-meat potatoes and eggs or apples can be cooked. in the 3 there is a large coffee pot in the 4 a large tea cetle. there is an iron pan also for browning coffee and heating flatirons, in front of the stove there is a shains hearth, which can be drawn back and there is a large grid iron for baking or broiling meat which can be covered with a shut iron reflector. This is superb for broiling beef stake and chicken. Back of the body of the stove containing the fire there is a large reflector. Vastly preferable to the one I obtained for Martha from Eugene, as it has several conveniences belonging to it that the one has not. There is also 4 griddles which cover the places for the different vessels when not in use, that answer very nice for frying fritters pancakes and these are used also to put bread upon to bake when the large tin canopy is used. This canopy has a top that can be lifted in order to see if the bread is doing well. this canopy is as large as the rim of the stove and is placed over it which serves as a reflector in baking. This stove requires very little compared with a fire place and makes a house comfortable indeed. With this stove Martha could in ordinary health cook for 3 times the number of your family, and Maria with a little instruction could with care cook for all your family. Indeed I can give you but an imperfect description of this stove. Charlotte says she would not take the world for hers if she could not get another. It almost does every thing itself. If you would desire one of these stoves I can obtain one for you from Cincinnati

Compliments of
Plotner Ford Tractor
Agricultural and Industrial
Thomasboro, Illinois

where they are manufactured as the agent of Mr. Whipple is here selling stoves. I paid 50 for mine without the pipe and Mr. Roff the agent says that he can afford them as cheap there. the stove can be shipped to perrysville and conveyed to Danville. And I can pay the agent here for the stove as soon as it is received there and I am notified of it. You could so place this stove on your hearth that if required you can burn wood in your chimney place but for this you will have no use as it makes a room much more comfortable than a fire. You could close your door next to the River and this would still make your stove heat the greater. In wood and a cook the cost of which is considerable in the course of a year you would save the price of a stove and you can cook either with wood or coal. I would be glad to receive a Epistle from you as soon as possible. Give our regards to all who may inquire after us. if Dr. Alexander or any of the citizens would desire a stove I can obtain one for them. I have some money that I could send to you and Col Moores if I thought it would go safe by mail. With the greatest respect we are yours.

A.L. and C. Risley"

This letter is taken from *Scrap Book: Amos Williams and Early Danville, Illinois*, by "His Woodbury Grandchildren," published by the Recording and Statistical Company in 1934, pp. 36-38. After the letter, the following note is added: "They finally bought the stove . . .four years after the transaction was begun. In the meantime the price of the stove declined from fifty to thirty seven dollars and eighty cents."

Partly because Amos Williams was such an important pioneer in the settlement of our county seat, being its first post master, but mostly because of the insight it gives into the lives all our ancestors lived on the early prairie, the following excerpt from the *Scrap Book* is included:

"How Grandpa Williams Lived"

"Grandpa Williams got up early every morning, built the wood fires (they did not know coal could be used), went down the hillside to the wonderful spring and got enough water for breakfast and filled the teakettle and hung it on the crane in the fireplace as there was no cook stoves then.

Compliments of
Kenneth R. Divan Construction Co.
Oakwood, Illinois 354-4446

"In the summertime they had no screens in the doors or windows. The houses were kept dark so as to keep out as many flies and mosquitos as possible. That is one reason why they had tall canopy, or four-poster, beds -- they could easily drape them with mosquito-netting. At the dinner table they would use "shoo-fly brushes," made of tissue or any kind of paper they could get and fastening it on a long stick, someone was delegated to stand by and "shoo the flies" off the table. Some used little peach branches. Many people built a little shed for a summer kitchen and had a covered porch between it and the house -- this was called the "dog-trot." The "dog-trot" made the house-wife a lot of extra steps but the home was cooler and they did not have nearly so many flies.

"Both post office and home were dimly lighted as there was no glass in the windows, only greased paper. Early mornings and at night when it was dark tallow candles were used. Each family had its own set of candle molds. Betty lamps were also used. Betty lamps had a disagreeable odor, as our Mother said, "They smelled to heaven."

"Many mornings Grandpa Williams was out of ink and had to get ink powder and make ink before starting his daily work. He walked out through the sitting room, across the lobby and on into the post office which was kept in his own home for over twenty years (in what was called the north room). Some mornings Mr. Williams would go to the kitchen where they were busy with household tasks and say, "Girls, mind the post office while I go up to the McCormick house and see if anyone new has come in. I also have to attend to some business over at the court house." And away he would go leaving the girls to carry on the business of the morning.

"The old letters of this time show a good quality of paper. The sheets were large, unruled, thick and tough, seven and one-half by twelve inches, more like fools cap paper though it had no glaze. The letters were written with a goose-quill pen (steel pens had not been invented), the slit in the pen holds the ink so it was necessary to cut a small slit in the goose quill and he always sharpened his knife before he made a pen. Quill pens were in use from the 6th century, 1848. Then the blotter or sander as it was called. . . this resembles a salt shaker with a flaring top. The sander was made of wood. The

Compliments of
Logan Ag Center
Fithian, Illinois

sand was shaken on the writing and then poured back into the sander again. At this time there were no envelopes, they were not used until 1840, and no stamps were used. The letters were folded lengthwise twice and one end inserted in the other and sealed with red sealing wax. The address was written on the blank side of the letter and it would have in the corner, "fee so much." The post-master had the privilege of sending and receiving mail free -- maybe that is the reason he had so much. Many wealthy people had seal rings with their crest or coat of arms embossed and used them to stamp the seal. If the seal was broken they could immediately tell that the letter had been opened.

"Now the business of the day was over and in these days they believed in "early to bed and early to rise." So Grandpa said, "Mary, we are going to have a cold night to-night so get the bed warmer and warm the beds." Mary goes to the south side of the large fire place and gets something resembling a long-handled brass skillet or a corn-popper with a lid. The handle is ornamental and about thirty inches long. Mary places first a layer of ashes and then a layer of red hot coals and then ashes. Fastening the lid down tight she followed Charlotte, who was carrying the candle, up the stairs, and slipped the bed warmer between the covers and warmed all the beds. Grampa Williams banked the fires good because if they went out they must strike a flint to light them or go to a neighbor and borrow "a coal" which neighbors often had to do.

"Mother picks up the candle-snuffers and snuffs out the lights. Quiet was about to reign -- a voice rang out, "I can't get my boots off and I can't find the bootjack." Charlotte went to the fireplace and lighted a taper and lit the candles again. They all hunted and finally found it under the new kitchen chair Leander Rutledge had made. They hauled and pulled but the boots seemed to have become a part of him, finally they came off and Grandpa said the first thing he must do in the morning was to rub them with Neat's Foot Oil."

"Mother said, "Amos there's your night cap under your pillow, don't forget to put it on."

"An old story is told of Amos Williams' wife. She kept a stack of hand-made night caps in the old glass-knobbed drawer and whenever

Compliments of
T B A Sales Co.
Champaign, Illinois

a man came from a distance she always gave him a night cap to take home to his wife." (pp. 23-25)

Amos Williams house and post office in those early days stood at the foot of Walnut street on Water where it bends around to the east to become South street. It was on a beautiful limestone bluff overlooking the Vermilion River, a bluff long-since robbed of its limestone to build the piers for two bridges, the Wabash Railroad bridge over the Vermilion and the old, wooden covered bridge that carried south Gilbert street over the Vermilion River. The McCormick House, Referred to in the excerpt above, is the current Grier-Lincoln.

"It was down Clark street and around on Water street along the bluff of the Vermilion river past Walnut street and Reverend Kingsbury's home, onto Vermilion street that the big lumbering stage coaches wended their way.

"In fine weather the mail was carried on top of the old Concord, New Hampshire stage coach, with passengers inside, who paid at the rate of $0.06 a mile. Stage tavern meals were 37½ cents. 'The mail was to be delivered in four horse post coaches, eight months and residue on horse back.'

"Some conditions of stage coach travel are well stated in a travelers guide book published in 1843, as the following: Emmigrants and travelers will find it to their interest always to be a little skeptical relative to statements of stage drivers and agents for stage coach lines, to make some allowances in their own calculations for delays, difficulties, and expenses, and above all, to feel perfectly patient and on good terms with themselves, the officers, and the world generally, if they do not move just as rapidly or fare quite as well as they desire, for they sometimes have breakdowns and runaways. In rainy bad weather the mail is carried on horseback and then the traveler must do the same or stay at home."

"The swindler and horse thief were rampant in the early days and the mail carrier besides giving verbal notice of them, posted bills along the route."

With such primitive and unreliable communications, it is no wonder folks back east occasionally received garbled accounts of

Compliments of
Burke Spring Shop
Danville, Illinois 443-1888

happenings out west, as demonstrated by the following letter.

"Mount Linneus Va.
June 27th, 1832

Dear Sir after my best respect to you I will procede on to inform you that your relations are all injoying good health at this present time I have nothing particularly strange to write to you But health is particular good through our Cuntry Grain is tolerable scarce with us but plenty to do Us untill harvest this summer is the coldest that ever i experienced in my life I can tell you that your old Uncle Arther Burn was with us last winter and the people was all well than in that part of the Cuntry I will inform you that it is in our newspapers that the Indians has broke out in the Illinois and kills and skelps as tha go but it is to be hoped that it is not so it is said that tha have had several hard battles on Black rock Creek tha say that laste week in Virmillion County the savages killed and took prisners thirty familyes but I hop that you are well and not disturbd by the savages and I want you to write immediately to me whether it is so or not -- and I want to know of you what for a chance you will give me to come and write in the office under you for one year or two or perhaps more we here that Squire Acleb (sic; undoubtedly "Caleb") Morgan is killed and skalped And I want you to write to me as soon as possible about the indians and about the others too direct you letter to Mount Linneus Mongolia County Virginia and so I ad no more at present but remain your loveing friend untill Death.

From John Draggoo"

Fighting inflation, as we are today, we can sympathize with the exorbitant prices commanded by labor and goods on the frontier in the early days of Vermilion County.

"This is one of the first bills from the first store in Danville, Illinois. It is dated from June 14, 1827 to February 4, 1828. It must have been one of the "saddle-bag stores," as they were called, because the provisions were brought up from Terre Haute on horseback in saddle-bags:

1827	To 1 Jar	.25
June 14	" 16½ H. Sugar	1.65
	" 12¾ to do	1.15

Compliments of
Vere M. Shepherd
Insurance Agency
Oakwood, Illinois 354-4426

Aug. 3	" ½ yd plaid	10
Sept. 5	" 3 quarts whiskey for county	37½
Nov. 20	" 2½ yds flannel	1.87½
	" 1 yd callico	43¾
Nov. 26	" 4 quarts and 1 pint whiskey	56¼
	" 2 lbs. coffee	50
	" 1 yd callico	37½
Dec. 12	" 3 quarts and pint whiskey	43¾
15	" 3 quarts and 1 pint whiskey	43¾
	" 1 skein thread	06¼
19	" 1 bottle paragoric	25
	" 1 tape	6¼
21	" ½ pint castor oyl	25
	" 1 small deer skin	37½
	" 1 skein silk	12½
		9.27½
1828	" ½ lb nails	6¼
Jan. 25	" 3 quarts and 1 pint whiskey	47¾
Feb. 4	" 9 light window glass	56¼
	" 1 quart whiskey	12½
		10.40¼

Feb. 9th 1828"

As we can see, inflation is not new. From Dec. 15, 1827, to Jan. 25, 1828, only five weeks, the price of whiskey went up from 43¾ cents to 47¾ cents for 3¼ quarts. But that commodity was so important, so universal a cure for whatever ailed one, it's quite possible the country would never had been settled without it.

Labor was equally high-priced. The following are bills for labor on early Vermilion County homes:

"Bill for Labor on a Cabin

3 days chopping	$ 2.25
8 days hauling	16.00
Hewing puncheons	4.00
raising	1.00

Compliments of
Rons Drive In
Ronald E. Lee
Oakwood, Illinois

Chinking and daubing	1.50
Building Chimney	3.00
Clapboards	1.00
	$34.25

Danville, Illinois, Oct. 31, 1835"

"Plastring house . . . . 152 3/4 yds

at 38 cts. per Y.D.	$57.38
Building Chimney	33.00
To lime	2.50
Whitewashing	0.75
The whole amount	$63.53"

"1834

Nov. 19 to Painting house	$24.00
" " " Puttying in 87 lights glass	87½
" " " Fixing table	18¾
" " " Fixing cellar door	25
" " " Fixing counter	62½
" " " To chair	2.00
	$25.93¾

Recd. Payment in full
Danville, Ill.
Nov. 19, 1834

Leander Rutledge, the
first cabinet maker"

As to exactly how the houses were built, an interesting insight is provided by Judge John H. Murphy's speech at the Old Settler's Reunion on August 5, 1878:

"Hezekiah Cunningham had a large stock of goods in a log store 16 by 25. (in 1828) Amos Williams built a hewed log house – that is, hewed the logs before they were up; Cunningham and I put up our houses and skutched down the logs afterwards."

As early as 1886, county residents were harking back to the old pioneer days, with tongue-in-cheek, for solutions to current

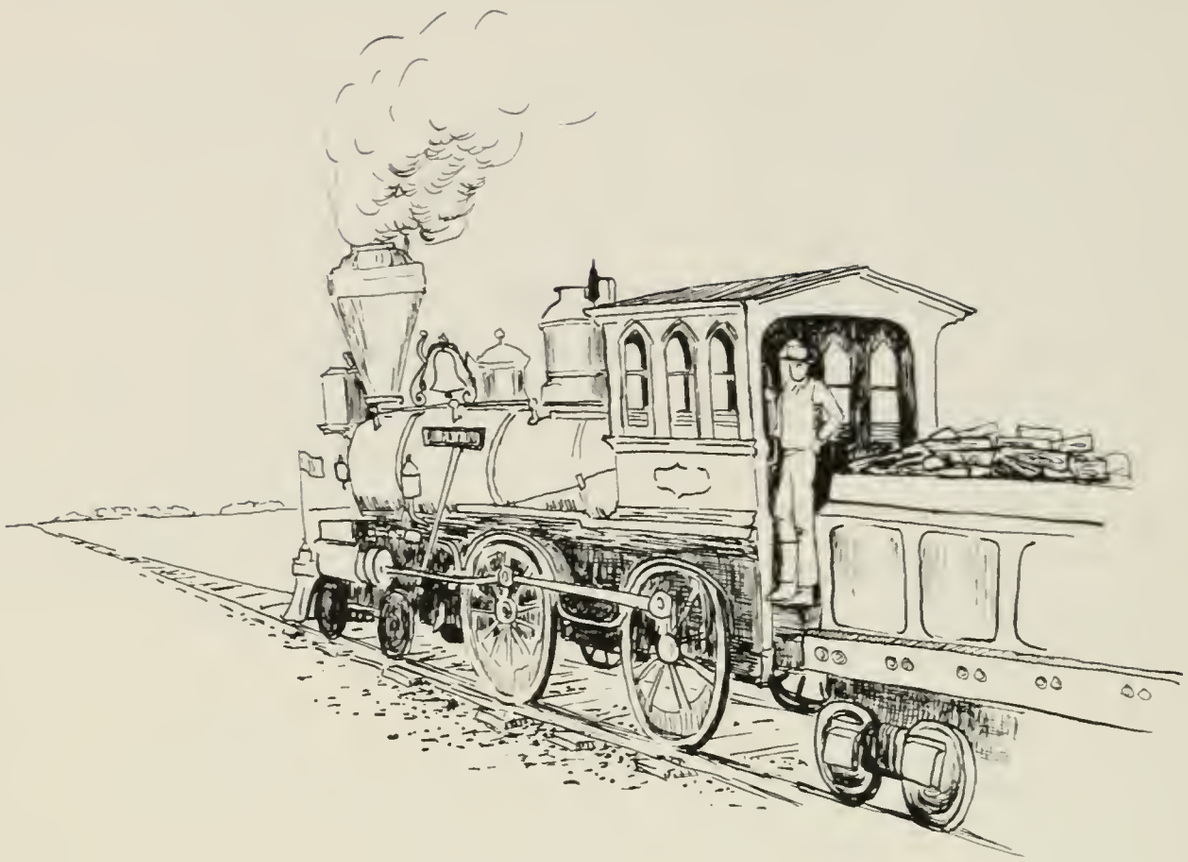
Compliments of
Oakwood Laundry and Dry Cleaning
Oakwood, Illinois

problems. The following is taken from the Saturday, September 4, 1886, edition of the *Daily Commercial*:

"As hundred of our readers are more or less troubled with billious fever and biliousness, we very gladly and without hope of recompense publish the following recipe used by Dr. Smith of Georgetown in the year 1828. We are acquainted with some of the ingredients, and can heartily recommend them:

'Take the emetic 24 or 30 minutes before the coted stage comes. After some purging take 60 drops of sodium, which will put the patient into a perspiration. In three or six hours take one grain of sulphate quinine every 2 hours. From 6 to 12 powders is sufficient. Then make a tea of dogwood bark, black cherry bark and quakenasp bark. Drink freely.' "

Compliments of
Rogers and Barnes Star Market
H. M. Rogers Fred Barnes
Oakwood, Illinois



VI. The Origin of Fithian

At some point around the time of the Civil War (1860-65), several thousand acres of open prairie in the west-central portion of the county were acquired by Dr. William Fithian. It is highly likely he acquired the land gradually over a period of several years, probably beginning in the 1840's, but certainly by the 1850's. There are several biographical sketches of Dr. Fithian, two of which are presented here. The first is rather brief and is taken from Beckwith (1879).

"Wm. Fithian, Danville, physician. Dr. Wm. Fithian is one among the oldest settlers of Vermilion county, and a man who has been identified with as much of the development and improvement that has been made in the county since 1830 as any of the pioneers of Danville. He is a native of Cincinnati, Ohio, and was born in the year 1800. In 1822 he began the study of medicine with Dr. Joseph T. Carter, of Urbana, Ohio, and was in time granted a diploma by the

Compliments of
Blue Room Cafe
Wendell & Lois Wilson
Oakwood, Illinois

board of censors. He practiced two years at Mechanicsburgh and four years with Dr. Carter, and in 1830 came west, arriving at Danville on the 1st of June, 1830. Before leaving Ohio we may mention the fact that he built the first house in both the city of Springfield and Urbana, Ohio. In 1834 he became quite interested in politics, and for several terms was a member of the legislature and afterward of the senate. He was also a soldier in the Blackhawk war. He has been very active in the movements which resulted in bringing several railroads of Danville. In 1871 he gave to the I.B. & W. road the right of way through a large tract of land in Oakwood township and five acres of land. The village of Fithian on this line of road was founded and named by the company in honor to the doctor. He is a member of several of the medical associations, and is one among the oldest practicing physicians of the State of Illinois."

One of the most often quoted impressions of Dr. William Fithian concerned a law suit for libel. Dr. W. R. Elghammer recounts the story in the Summer, 1965, issue of *The Heritage of Vermilion County*. "In October of 1851, in the old red brick courthouse in Danville, Abraham Lincoln addressed his client, Dr. William Fithian, with these words; "Now suppose, Doctor, I was to ask you if you every abandoned a corpse of your wife at Paris and left her to be buried at the mercy of others?" This twenty-five thousand dollar liable (sic) suit was filed for Dr. Fithian by Lincoln, Usher F. Linder and Oliver L. Davis against George W. Cassady, an early Danville Settler. Fithian and Cassady had apparently been good friends earlier because a map of Chicago in 1830 both their names appear on a plot of ground on the southwest corner of Halsted and Roosevelt Road.

"Strange to say, their disagreement arose over the erection of two seminaries. In 1850 the Danville seminary, called the Red Seminary, was incorporated by members of the Methodist Church and constructed at Main and Pine Streets. The building is now occupied by the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Soon afterwards Dr. Fithian and other members of the Presbyterian Church started another seminary at the northwest corner of Vermilion and Seminary Streets, now the site of the Holiday Inn Motel, which they called the White Seminary.

"A bitter rivalry developed between the promoters of these two

Compliments of
Fithian Grain Co.
Fithian, Illinois

schools and they frequently engaged in personal quarrels. Cassady, of the Red Seminary, wrote an article attacking Dr. Fithian, stating that the doctor had abandoned his wife's body in order to attend his sick son and had not returned for her funeral. He berated him, saying that if it had been a political election in place of a dead wife, Doctor Fithian would have ridden all night to attend.

"On October 25, 1851, a jury returned a verdict for Dr. Fithian and assigned damages of $557.90. The defendant, Cassady, paid the judgment and then for several years after he would list on his personal property tax schedule, "The character of Dr. Fithian $557.90 for which I bought and paid for." "

Of the four children of Dr. William Fithian, the one most intimately connnected with the town named after their father was Elisha C. B. Fithian. Pearson (1903) presents a detailed biography of this son of the founder.

" "Success," said Napoleon, "depends upon three things; energy, system, and perserverance." With the realization of this truth Elisha C. B. Fithian has so directed his business affairs that he has prospered in his undertaking and to-day he is one of the most extensive landowners of Vermilion county. He is also one of its pioneer citizens, for his birth occurred November 8, 1837, in Danville, when that city was but a village. His parents were Dr. William and Orlethea (sic) T. (Berry) Fithian, who are mentioned elsewhere in this volume. The son pursued his early education in a little log building called the Williams school, his first teacher being a Scotchman named Robinson. He was not only a good instructor, but he also exemplified his belief in the old adage "spare the rod and spoil the child." This was a subscription school and the teacher "boarded around" in the homes of the different pupils. Later Mr. Fithian was a student in the White Seminary, a Presbyterian institution, where he continued for some time, acquiring a good English education.

"After completing his school duties he entered the general store of his father in Danville, remaining there for about a year. He then came to the farm in Oakwood township, for he believed that the outdoor life would prove beneficial to his failing health. He took charge of his father's farm of thirty-seven hundred acres, very little of which was

Compliments of
Stewarts Auto Parts
Champaign, Illinois

at that time under cultivation. Mr. Fithian began breaking the prairie, using five or six yoke of oxen to a breaking plow which would turn a furrow of twenty-two inches. He broke a thousand acres in this way, but much of it had to be gone over again, often as many as three or four times, for there had been no ditching done and the warm water would again start the prairie grasses. Finally, Mr. Fithian gave up the attempt to transform into cultivable fields the low land and used it as pasture. He turned his attention to the stock business on an extensive scale. His father was a large stock man and he had gained practical knowledge of the business. When the railroads were built through this portion of the state he made shipments of his cattle to Chicago. He remembers distinctively, however, the early conditions of the county when there was much game, including prairie chickens, ducks, brant and geese. There were also large numbers of prairie wolves that might be heard howling at night or seen skirring over the country in the daytime. Mr. Fithian has seen as many as sixteen deer in a single herd pass through his orchard. At night, if the corn was not well fenced, the deer would enter the fields and eat and tramp down the crop. As time passed, however, marked improvements were made in methods of agriculture, with all of which Mr. Fithian kept abreast, in fact, he has even been regarded as one of the most progressive agriculturists of this part of the state as well as one of the most extensive and prosperous landowners.

"On the 23rd of February, 1865, occurred the marriage of Mr. Fithian and Miss Anna M. Hayes, a native of Athens county, Ohio, and a daughter of John and Adaline (Neblock) Hayes, both of whom were natives of Pennsylvania and were of Scotch and German descent, respectively. Their marriage was celebrated in Ohio and Mr. Hayes was a carpenter by trade. In 1850, accompanied by his wife and children, he drove across the country to Danville in a prairie schooner, as the old covered wagons at that time were called. The journey occupied twenty-one days and at night the family camped by the roadside. After reaching Vermilion county, Mr. Hayes spent a few months in Danville and then located a half mile south of the old town of Homer, Champaign County. There he purchased land upon which he resided for seven or eight years, after which he returned to

Compliments of
Homer Grain Co.
Homer, Illinois

Vermilion County, where he lived upon a farm a half mile from the Fithian homestead, his home being in Oakwood township, where he spent his remaining days. There his death occurred in 1885 and his wife passed away on the home place in 1894. They were the parents of twelve children, of whom six are now (1903) living, namely: Mrs. Fithian; John, of Vermilion County; Mrs. Edith McCoy, of Kansas; William, of Indiana; Mrs. Lydia Cass, of Danville; and James, who is also living in this county. The marriage of Mr. and Mrs. Fithian had been blessed with five children; Paul H. is a practicing physician of Fithian; Lalla is at home; Elisha C. B. is living upon a part of his father's farm, and is married to Christiana Illk, by whom he has two children, George William and Anna Dorothy; John Charles, who is also upon his father's farm, married Sarah Reese and has one son, Orion B; and David W. is a practicing dentist of Rossville. He wedded Jessie Fellow.

"Mr. Fithian was made a Mason in 1875 and belongs to Fairmount Lodge, No. 590, F. & A.M. His wife is a member of the Methodist church and his political support is given the Republicans, but while he keeps well informed on the issues of the day he has never consented to hold office except that of school director. He has eleven hundred acres of valuable land and for some years he has been living practically retired, having rented almost all of his land to his sons. Mr. Fithian is well informed concerning the history of Vermilion County from an early epoch in its history. In the year 1834 he had an aunt in Iowa who returned to Danville on her way to Ohio and here she was joined by the mother of our subject who, taking her baby son with her, accompanied the aunt to their old home in the Buckeye state, making the entire trip on horseback. This fact goes to show what the pioneer women of that day were capable of. On one occasion Mr. Fithian's father sent by wagon to Ohio for two McCormick reapers, which could not then be purchased in the west. In those early days our subject hauled wheat to Attica, Indiana, and if prices were "high" he could sell forty cents per bushel. Corn brought eight and ten cents per bushel and in his boyhood Mr. Fithian would measure corn from the crib in a half bushel measure and would pass it through the window to the men on the outside. As

Compliments of
McVey Trucking
Oakwood, Illinois

time passed Mr. Fithian, taking his part in the agricultural work of the county became a leader in progress and improvement in his line of activity and by the capable control of his business interests he won splendid success. He has, however, never allowed the accumulation of wealth to in any way warp his kindly nature and there is no man in the community who enjoys to a wider extent the esteem and regard of those with whom he was associated."

Several events occurred in the 1850's to people who were later to be important figures in the settlement of Fithian. Samuel Dalbey married Sarah C. Watts on December 28, 1853, and rented a farm one mile north of the future site of Fithian. Four years later he moved to Lawrence, Kansas, and then in the fall of 1857 to Warren County, Indiana. In 1858 he bought and moved to the Cass farm south of present day Muncie. Later he sold it and bought the Dalbey home place.

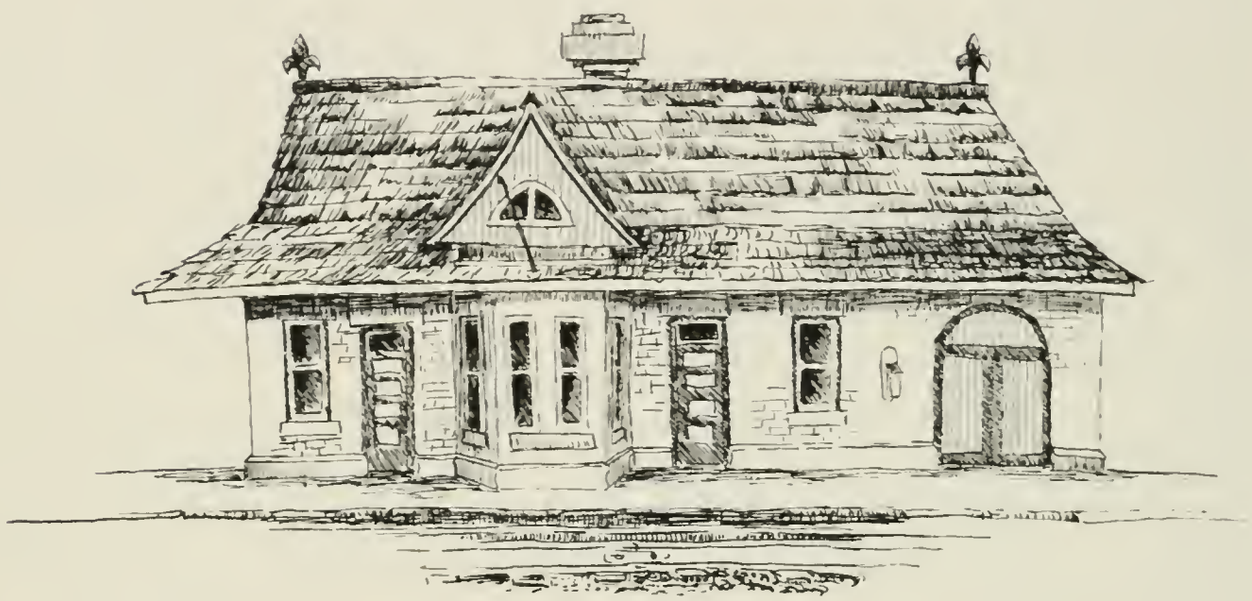
In 1854, when Elisha C. B. Fithian began farming his father's land near future routes 49 and 150, George and Sarah A. (Bowling) Boorde moved to a farmstead one and one-half miles northwest of the village-to-be on the Fithian land. Mr. Boorde was later to join Comp. C., 125th Infantry, to fight in the Civil War. Aaron Dalbey married Martha E. Custer on December 23, 1854. And about this time, Winnans Littell, a merchant from Middletown, Ohio, bought land for farming and cattle grazing north of the Fithian site. He had children: Charles, Florence and William H.

Sometime after September 21, 1854 (when he married Mary Jane Mead, daughter of Nathanial and Anna (Crane) Mead), Jackson Cromwell moved to an 80 acre farm three miles north of Fithian. There John D. "J.D." Cromwell was born December 28, 1858. The Cromwells had three other surviving children. The Central Methodist Church was organized in 1859, and some time later Lysander Smoot paid $1.25 an acres for his land one and one-half miles northwest of the village.

As we approach the 1860's, the pace of developments culminating in the birth of Fithian picks up considerably. Since the history of the village properly begins in that decade, the material from this point onward will be organized chronologically by decade, each decade

Compliments of
Palmer American Nat'l Bank
Danville, Illinois

being prefaced by a brief note commenting on regional and national developments in politics, sports, industry, fashions and other areas of popular life to suggest something of the flavor of life at that time.



Train Station C.A. 1900

Compliments of
Meadow Gold Ice Cream and Milk
Champaign, Illinois

VII. The Fithian Area Prior to 1860

1799 William Fithian, M.D., born April 7, in Cincinnati, Ohio, son of George Fithian, a tavern-keeper.

1830 Dr. William Fithian, moves his practice to Danville, Illinois from Urbana, Ohio.

1837 Elisha C. B. Fithian, youngest of three sons of Dr. William Fithian, born November 8, in Danville.

1840 James and Maria (Spencer) Yeazel homestead free land on the Salt Fork southwest of Fithian in April. Their son, William, later married Susan Deakin and received free land north from the river to the Old State Road. They had two children, James and Margaret, who married Ed Housholder. The Householders also had two children, Mabel and Mamie. Sometime around the middle of the century, Winnans Littell, a merchant from Middletown, Ohio, buys land for farming and cattle grazing north of the site of Fithian. The Littells had three children, Charles, Florence and William H.

1851 Samuel Dalbey marries Sarah C. Watts December 28 and they rent a farm one mile north of present-day Fithian

1853 Samuel and Sarah Dalbey move to the Dalbey homestead upon the death of his father

1854 Elisha C. B. Fithian begins the attempt to farm his father's land near future Routes 49 and 150.

1854 George and Sarah A. (Bowling) Boorde move to a homestead one and one-half miles northwest of Fithian-to-be from Covington, Indiana. Later, he was to be in the Civil War, Company "C" 125th Illinois Infantry.

1854 Aaron Dalbey married Martha E. Custer, December 23

1854 John Rueb is born in Ohio

???? Sometime after September 21, 1854, when he married Mary Jane Mead, daughter of Nathaniel and Anna (Crane) Mead, Jackson Cromwell moved to an 80-acre farm three miles north of the Fithian Farm. The Cromwells had four surviving children.

1857 Samuel and Sarah Dalbey move to Lawrence, Kansas, and, in

Compliments of
Alexander Insurance Agency
Potomac, Illinois

the fall, to Warren County, Indiana

1858 Samuel and Sarah Dalbey buys and moves to the Cass farm south of present Muncie. They later sold it and bought the Dalbey home place.

1858 John D. (J.D.) Cromwell is born here, the son of Jackson and Mary Jane (Mead) Cromwell

1858 The following is taken from the abstract to the Floyd and Genevieve (Tudor) Smith farm two miles north of present Route 150 and speaks eloquently to the low regard in which the prairie was held by most of our ancestors:

"March 4, 1854. An act to amend an act to dispose of swamp and over-flowed land and to pay the expenses of selecting and surveying same.

June 22, 1852.

To: The Board of Supervisors.
April 2, 1857. John C. Short, Commissioner.
Election and Appointment, Swampland Commissioner.
June 2, 1858".

1859 Central Methodist Episcopal Church is organized three miles north of the Fithian farm.

* * * * *

1860-1870 "A Nation Divided"

The Grand Old Party organized and succeeded in sending to the White House the "Rail Splitter" from Illinois who charted the Union's victory in a Civil War that tore asunder the loyalties of kith, kin and country. During the War, the Homestead Act was passed, and gold was discovered in Montana. The nation mourned its first presidential assassination, and Andrew Johnson, Lincoln's proxy, was vilified by the Radical Republicans in the nation's dirtiest congressional campaign. Johnson was cartooned cavorting drunkenly with prostitutes in the White House. The range cattle industry, fuel for a million TV and movie shows later, began in the West. Grant was elected president, and the first transcontinental railroad was completed. Free mail delivery to homes and businesses in towns and

Compliments of
St. Joseph IGA Foodliner
St. Joseph, Illinois

Conkeytown Bridge 1867-1956

cities was inaugurated. Hoop skirts were the rage, and with the shorter, tilting hoops revealing more of the legs than old-style hoops, false calves came into fashion. Once in awhile accidents of the most terrible sort occurred, and trails of sawdust or hair were left in the wake of a lady's progress. Housewives bought for their families Dr. Marshall's Catarrh Snuff, Prof. Leonard's Celebrated Nectary Bitters, and Red Jacket Stomach Bitters. Beardless youngsters and aging fathers conscientiously applied the Grecian Compound to grow whiskers and mustaches in six weeks. Children with the itch had Pururigio Loto rubbed on them industriously, for it was the "Great Itch and Humor Killer of the 19th Century." Velocipedes were the fad of 1869, and for those who did not spend their summer evenings rolling down unpaved streets on their new machines, there was horseback riding on the prairie. The less athletic played croquet. Everybody played croquet. Baseball was popular as it had been for ten years. There was a baseball tournament in Rockford attended by teams from Detroit, Milwaukee, Dubuque and Chicago. The Cinci-

Compliments of
Southern States Cooperative
Muncie, Illinois

natti Red Stockings made a nation-wide tour, as did Harvard's crack team, the "most brilliant in the history of college baseball." The first intercollegiate football game was held November 6, 1869, between Princeton and Rutgers. Mike McCoole defeated Aaron Jones at Busenbark Station, Ohio, in an illegal but openly attended prize fight. The Bowery Theatre opened in New York City, and several offshoots of theatre swept the country, e.g., the circus, the variety show, burlesque and the legitimate stage.

* * * * * *

Henry and Sarah Burkenbusch 1860's

1862 Aaron Dalbey left from Homer to join Company "E" 73rd Illinois Infantry. He was injured October 8 in the battle of Perryville and convalesced in Perryville General Hospital. John Hayes came to Homer from Ohio. He was the father of twelve children, including Annie M., who married Elisha C. B. Fithian three years later.

1863 George Boorde died in Camp Chase, Ohio, from an illness contracted in the march to Nashville of Company "C" 125th Illinois Infantry. His wife, Sarah A. (Bowling) Boorde returned to this area and moved to Indianola. Aaron Dalbey was

Compliments of
Trislers Seed Farms
Glen Hays, Dealer

transferred to the New Albany, Indiana, Hospital in October. Mrs. Joshua (Elizabeth Brenner) Bantz died in Ohio. She was the mother of Ezra J. Bantz. John Rueb and his parents settled in the Central neighborhood, three miles north of the Fithian farm, coming from Ohio in a covered wagon. He was nine years old.

1864 Aaron Dalbey was discharged from the New Albany, Indiana hospital and returned home on January 20. Ezra J. Bantz purchased land one mile south of present-day Muncie and moved there the following year.

1865 John R. Thompson, Sr., was born November 13, on the family farm southwest of Fithian on the Old State Road. Elisha C. B. Fithian married Anna M. Hayes February 23. Ezra J. Bantz moved to the farm south of the site of Muncie he had purchased earlier. It was this man, coming from eastern Indiana, who later proposed the name adopted for the town of Muncie.

1866 Dr. Paul E. Fithian, *the* Dr. Fithian and "Doc" to three generations of residents, was born July 4. He later married Mrs. Cora Jewell. Isaac Tudor brought his family to the area from Washington Court House, Ohio. On an earlier trip he had purchased 80 acres one-half mile north of the site of Rumpler from J. Longstreth, who had homesteaded the land. The Tudor's oldest daughter, Alice, died that first year, but they reared 11 of their 12 children. Originally, the children attended Black School, one mile east of the farm, but Mr. Tudor considered that too far to walk in prairie winters, so he contributed the southwest corner of his land for the construction of Little Giant School, remodeled nearly a century later by the E. M. Swengel family and presently occupied by the Don and Jane (Swengel) Creason family. Isaac was regarded as a sage weather prophet, and all area residents came to recognize the two-wheeled cart he was fond of driving. His land today is part of that farmed by Floyd and Genevieve (Tudor) Smith.

1867 The Old State Road was still the only east-west route in the area, and Conkey Town seemed destined to become the center

Compliments of
Wendell Wright

of trade and commerce. James M. Dougherty, the road commissioner from Fairmount certainly thought so when he okayed the construction of a wooden, covered bridge over the Salt Fork next to the old grist mill of 1826. John Shepherd had brought the burrs for the old mill from Ohio by oxen. Ewell Jeffers, a Civil War veteran, hauled most of the rock and lumber, and the bridge was completed in 1867. Also completed that year was a large (four foot by six foot) plat of the county. The only towns in this area were Fairmount, Conkeytown, Newtown and Higginsville (on the North Fork, northeast of present-day Collison). Among landowners in this area, the name William Fithian dominates the map from below the Salt Fork to one-half mile north of the present Fithian Grain Elevator. Others include:

H. Stearns
G. Board
L. Frexhoff
G. Lowman
B. W. Thompson
L. Rawlings
G. F. Longstreth
E. S. Fisher
S. Griffith
C. G. Draper
T. F. Cannon
J. L. Shepherd
N. Mead
J. McFarlain
R. McKinney
R. H. McCray
Isaac K. Cannon
P. Meyer
P. H. Loomis
Jas. Gorman
A. Reub
H. Musson
L. Dalbey
H. Sallee

S. Stearns
W. H. Noble
Perry Blackburn
J. Cromwell
J. R. Thompson
A. Pugh
H. L. Ellsworth
M. J. Sadler
H. W. Beckwith
J. Black
J. H. Smith
R. Fox
J. Jones
John Cass
J. Yeazel
A. J. Wray
J. Hargan
F. H. Butler
H. Hobick
Thos. Cox
Samuel G. Craig
John Hart
C. Ratliff
Wm. Mylor

G. W. Mead
W. J. Minser
J. Cathers
J. E. Thompson
W. Havard
W. Maydole
Cathroons
G. N. Speckmire
I. Tudor
A. Miller
C. McKnight
S. Mead
J. M. McCarty
John Hays
W. Davis
R. H. Canady
J. Little
J. Ray
J. Hubbard
J. R. Watson
J. E. Vinson
Dickson
Ed Corbley
E. W. Taylor

1868 This year marked the formation of Oakwood Township from

Compliments of
Custom Farms Service
Stanley Harper
Fithian, Illinois

part of Catlin, Pilot and Vance Townships. It also saw the marriage of Mr. and Mrs. John Crain, the maternal grandparents of Mrs. Fred (Dorothy A. Adams) Hays.

1869 The year 1869 was momentous for the future village of Fithian. Its very existence and its chief function for nearly a century were ensured by two events. John Goff, the grain dealer for the area had been selling oats to Crain and Son in Danville. But he operated under a heavy handicap imposed by the conditions under which Crain and Son would purchase from him, namely, that Goff would have to haul the grain to the county seat unless it could be weighed here. Since oats were bringing 40 cents per bushel, Goff considered it a good investment to undertake the construction of a wagon scales, and in the fall of '69 the first grain was weighed west of Danville. The other event was the issue of a charter for the Danville, Urbana, Bloomington and Pekin Railroad. And in December, shorly after John Goff's wagon scales were completed, the I.B.W. (Indianapolis, Bloomington and Western) Railroad reached Danville from the west. For some time it was known as the "*I Better Walk*" line because for nine months at one time and for shorter periods quite frequently no trains ran due to bridges out, tracks innundated, etc. Dr. William Fithian had contributed one and one-half miles of land across his farm in order to secure a shipping station on the line. The building of the line was marked by scandals. Hundreds of laborers were cheated of their pay, according to Beckwith (1879), but "a lively time" was apparently had by nearly all. The first train ran over the line January 4, 1879.

* * * * *

1870-1880 "The Scandals of the Seventies"

Grant is re-elected, and the Credit Mobilier and the Whiskey Ring Scandals are promptly exposed. Silver was demonitized, and the "Crime of '73' is blamed for the economic panic and depression that develops. The mining boom out West reaches its peak in 1874, we go to war with the Sioux Nation, and the great Tilden-Hayes election

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Steel Fabricating, Etc.
Brewer Road
Danville, Illinois

dispute rocks the country in 1876. Widespread poverty pushes the Greenback Party to a highpoint in 1877. Railroads spanned the continent, and America began to think steel and steam. Cities grew at an alarming rate. Likable bandit Butch Cassidy pillaged trains on the Union Pacific, then posed with his band for commemorative photographs. Baseball organized a young, handle-bar moutachioed National League. A bumper crop of millionaires housed themselves in fantastic mansions full of bric-a-brac, over-stuffed furniture and potted palms. The nation took to (and fell off of) an astonishing assortment of bicycles, and soothed its ills with Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound and Egyptian Regulator Tea. Charles Dickens died June 9, 1870, at the age of 52, and the name of Thomas Edison, who never completed high school, made the world's first phonograph record, "Mary Had a Little Lamb".

* * * * * *

H. Bristow Blacksmith

Compliments of
L & L Sales and Service, Inc.
Harlan Lee
1211 E. University Ave.
Urbana, Illinois

1870 On April 8, Asa H. Guy, the County Surveyor, filed a plat of a town for Dr. Fithian, to be called Fithian. The original plat consisted of two full blocks each side of Main Street and one block and two lots of a second block each side of the railroad. The 1870 U.S. Census, the first since Oakwood Township had been formed, reported 2,364 persons, including 53 of foreign birth. On April 8, William E. Jenkins married Harriet Black, the daught of James H. and Elizabeth Ann Black. In the spring Daniel D. VanBuskirk came to Fithian from Great Meadows, New Jersey, where he was born November 8, 1844. Here he purchased 80 acres for $1,000.00 or $12.50 per acre. This is the land where Luther G. VanBuskirk lived until 1949 and where Raymond L. and Elaine VanBuskirk now reside. In the summer Ann Eliza ("Lida") Randall received from her fiancee Lysander Smoot a letter written June 17, in the "Cherokee Nation." Lysander had left for the trip west on May 16 and had passed through a part of Arkansas he describes as "that God-forsaken country." The "Cherokee Nation" was within three miles "of the line of Kansas." He notes that the people there constitute "not a very desirable society -- not as good as the Indians." Mabel (Knight) Renfro's mother was born during this decade in Conkeytown. The Fithian Methodist-Episcopal charge was assigned to the Pilot circuit and extend in both directions from Fithian. In September, the I.B.W. Railroad (or the "Big 4" as it was known by then) was completed beyond Danville to Crawfordsville, Indiana, and by December, to Indianapolis.

1871 In March, Henry Berkenbusch bought the first lot in the new village and moved his store to it, building and all, from the corner one mile north. This lot was on the west side of Main Street, the building later occupied by the old Cromwell Store, where Gary Cromwell's Barber Shop is now. Berkenbusch was a most enterprising young fellow and consequently chalked up several firsts for the new village, among them, he was the first to ship goods on the railroad from Fithian, and he was appointed the first village postmaster. Later in the year he

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took in J. P. Nichols as partner in the general store. A Dr. Rice, M.D., was the first physician to locate here, and a few months later Dr. Samuel T. Smith opened an office. Dr. Smith later moved his office to Muncie. The second merchant in town was H. Penrod, who sold agricultural implements. F. M. Canady was third with a dry-goods store, S. Solomon was fourth with a drug store and the firm of Frisch, Littler and Booker was fifth. Soon a sixth merchant opened for business, Graham and Graham. George W. Graham had risen from private to major in the Civil War and had returned in 1865 to operate a coal business at the old Salt Works until 1871. His partner in the general merchandise emporium was Enoch T. Graham. The Methodist Episcopal Church organized with the Rev. Alvan Helmick as the first pastor. He was the second son of Eli Helmick, known throughout the Illinois Country as the "Father of the Middle Fork County." The Pilot Circuit formed a year earlier had expanded to include the Cahmpaign Circuit, and some were agitating for a separate Fithian Charge. But there was considerable opposition to such a move. Many of the existing "classes" (especially, Central, Black and Cass) were lothe to give up their home locale for the long drive each Sabbath to Fithian. In addition, they did not like "preaching." But the more organized town members won the day, and in early 1871 the building was framed and boarded in on the southwest corner of Adams and Washington streets, one block west of Main. This corner was later occupied by the Hargans, then D. J. Bantz, then Tom Gritten, and later, Pascal J. Swaim. Due to the opposition and the lack of enthusiasm, the church was poorly attended. Since a majority of the townsfolk felt a school was a more pressing need, the church building was later sold to the district and, for several years, was used as both church and school. Rev. Helmick held a great meeting here with the support of laymen Vinson, Cork and Oakwood. In succeeding years until a parsonage was built, the pastor roomed with the Meades, Cromwells, Hargans, Blacks and others. The Circuit then included Union-Central-Ogden-

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St. Joseph, Illinois

Fithian, and some years the preacher lived in Ogden, other years here. In September, 1871, the Rev. McReynolds, a volatile Irishman, assumed the Charge. About Christmas, the blackest in the history of Fithian, the "Black Death" smallpox, broke out.

1872 By January, the epidemic was so widespread the local church was temporarily removed from the Circuit, and no pastor was assigned here for over a year. The following account of that terrible year is by H. S. Dalbey and appeared in the Summer, 1969, issue of *Heritage* magazine, pg. 13. "If I remember correctly, there were about thirty to thirty-five cases and most of them died of the dread disease. As they died, they were put into wooden caskets and buried in the night with no funerals as we know them.

"Nathan Russell, who worked at the elevator, was immune to the disease and was an angel of mercy, doing as much as he could to relieve the suffering among them all.

"Fithian was a new village on a new railroad. I can't imagine there being more than twenty-five to thirty families at the time. There was a doctor, but I've forgotten his name." (Dr. Samuel T. Smith)

"What added to the spread of the disease was the way people lived. This was in the horse and wagon days. Some had their own cow, and some kept a pig or two to eat the refuse from the table and dish water. Others, after washing the dishes, threw the dishwater out into the backyard.

"The wells were dug, and water was got out of the well with a rope and bucket. This resulted in swarms of flies and mosquitoes. When the flies were bad while the people ate their meals, someone with a branch with leaves would shoo them off.

"Fithian was troubled in those days with wells going dry in dry weather, and in rainy weather because of poor drainage, the waters would become stagnant after the dry weather set in.

"In some families everyone was taken. If a person knew all the hardships of those days, it would fill a large book."

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The Second Nat'l Bank of Danville
Danville, Illinois

In 1872, George Graham assumed the postmastership after Henry Berkenbusch relinquished it. Graham remained postmaster until 1879. Fithian, in this second year of its life, had already one of the largest warehouses on the railroad in this part of the country. There were several grain and hog buyers of considerable wealth and importance using the Fithian shipping station.

1873 The Methodist Episcopal Church building was sold to the district to be used as a school and a church. The Rev. J. D. Botkin came to the Circuit in September, the first assigned after the "Black Death", and shortly thereafter held a big meeting in the church-schoolhouse. Many came for miles around, and several from Muncie professed conversion, greatly strengthening the Baptist Church there. Mrs. Bantz, mother of Oscar E., joined the church at this meeting. On October 12, a plat for the first addition to the village, Franklin's Addition, was filed.

1874 The eldest of Dr. William Fithian's three sons, George B. Fithian, died.

1875 Rose Ellen Cronkhite, the mother of Virgil Haynes, was born April 7, on a farm south of Fithian. Miss Cronkhite married Archie Haynes and had the honor of being the oldest continuous resident of Fithian at its Centennial Celebration September, 1970. John Doney opened a blacksmith shop in the young village. The Rev. B. Barthlow succeeded Botkin as the M.E. Pastor, and George W. Meade and his wife joined the church under his pastorate. (Rev. Barthlow died in 1885 in Philo, Illinois) Rev. G. W. Reed accepted the M.E. pulpit from Rev. Barthlow, and Rev. Reed was the last pastor to hold services in the old church-school building. Joshua Bantz, father of Esra J. died in Ohio. Sometime after 1875 Lysander Smoot paid $1.25 per acre for 160 acres one-half mile northwest of Fithian. The 160 embraced the J. W. Bales and the Perry Blackburn farms. A large, heavy volume was published by W. R. Brink and Company of Chicago containing beautifully illustrated plats of all the townships in Vermilion County,

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Bill's Barber Shop
24 W. North St.
Danville, Illinois

biographies of many of its older citizens, maps of most of the villages, and drawings of all the large and established homesteads in the county. The name William Fithian still dominated Oakwood Township from the Salt Fork to one-half mile north of Fithian. New landholders not appearing on the earlier plat include:

E. C. B. Fithian	W. Way	H. G. Ottis
Zach Flangher	Milton Henderson	Clia Linkmeyer
Purnell & Henry	Thos. W. Deakin	Sarah VanBuskirk
Owen McKnight	E. J. Bantz	Jas. Poage
J. W. Bales	Jno. Devoss	C. Elliott
Celia Linkmyer	Hillary	Geo. Lucas
J. Henry	W. E. Jenkins	Allen Casteel
J. A. Swearinger	Mrs. E. Coons	W. M. Morris
T. D. McKee	Hiram Huffman	Jos. H. Steele
J. H. Pricer	Chas. Bodkin	W. B. Custer
Thos. Firebaugh	Davis Harris	

1876 Mrs. Mabel Buckingham Butz taught "summer school" at Biddle School and rode horseback to her home in Fairmount every weekend. Mrs. Butz was 16 at the time and while returning one Monday morning was frightened by a man at Conkeytown bridge. She galloped her horse through the bridge, up "Shepherd's Hill", and on to school, losing her sack-lunch in the process. Later, her wits a bit more collected, she was embarrassed by it all and resolved to tell no one about it. But the man was a local farmer, whom she knew well but had not recognized, and he recounted the incident with great relish. To her dying day Mrs. Butz was the butt of this oft-repeated joke. In 1876, John D. Cromwell, or "J.D." as he almost universally was know, worked for six months for a Mrs. Webster in a general store. Later he hauled one-quarter of all the bricks used in building the new McCormick House in Danville, later the Grier-Lincoln Hotel. Jessie R. Fellows was born October 5, in Conkeytown, to Edwin and Mary (Berkley) Fellows. Miss Fellows later married a nephew of Dr. William Fithian and is the Jessie Fithian whose excellent account of the early days in Conkeytown appeared in the Summer, 1968,

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Crow's Hybrid Corn Co.
Dealers - Estel Vinson, Don Tate
Floyd Bohlen, Sam Laker, Chas. Green

issue of *Heritage*, pp. 2-3, quoted extensively above. The Rev. J. D. Botkin returns to Fithian as the M.E. pastor (he'd been here in 1873), and under his leadership a new church building is built on the site of the present parsonage. The parsonage at that time was just west of the church, on the alley. It was a one-room, frame structure with a vestibule, steeple above, bell and an old organ that stood in the southwest corner. The vestibule had a door at each end opening into the sanctuary on the north. The men entered by one door, and the women the other. The children met at the front. Two stoves were used for heat, and the classes were divided by sex, the men meeting on one side, the women on the other. Years later, this building was sold to William ("Billy") Soward, who moved it downtown to the southeast corner of Main and Washington streets, where Virgil Haynes' service station stands today. Soward remodeled it into a drugstore, and later it was brick veneered and a community hall was built on the second floor. Here were held countless dances, plays, meetings, religious services, athletic events, lectures and games. The drug store was owned and operated by Art and Lil Dunn for a time, then sold to Floyd "Toady" Neiman, who sold patent medicine only. Eventually the building was torn down by Bob Owens who was a second husband of Mrs. William (Florence Black) Soward. The salvaged materials were used to build the structures in Homer Park.

1877 Dr. Samuel T. Smith gave up his Fithian office and began practice in Muncie. The Rev. S. Huber came to the M.E. pulpit. "J.D." Cromwell hauled one-eighth of all the brick used in building the new county Courthouse in Danville. Mrs. Harvey (Fannie Lockwood) Stearns died August 1, at age 87. Her husband had died at age 56 on November 11, 1847. They were the parents of Alvin Stearns, the eldest of eight children. Daniel D. VanBuskirk married Clara Bailey of Perrysville, Indiana. This couple ultimately had eight children: William K., Sarah, Kate, Daniel D., Margaret Josephine, Mary Frances and George D., the youngest. A daughter of Daniel D. by an earlier

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marriage, Mary Elizabeth "Pet" married George McMahon, and they lived in the rural Ogden area until their later years when they moved to Conkeytown.

1878 "J.D." Cromwell married Mary E. Long of Perrysville, Indiana, the daughter of William J. and Nancy E. (Gritton) Long on October 3. The Rev. W. J. Tull was called to the M.E. Church for a two-year pastorate.

1879 George Graham, who became postmaster when Henry Berkenbusch relinquished that position in 1872, is known to have remained postmaster at least through this year and quite possibly until 1890, when John Doney got the job. Dr. William Fithian, the town's founder, gave up his medical practice in Danville. The H. H. Hill Co. of Chicago published a hefty, 1041-page volume entitled *History of Vermilion County, Illinois,* by Hiram W. Beckwith, in which he notes that the old schoolhouse in Fithian (at Washington and Adams Streets) is becoming very worn. He also describes the new M.E. Church in the southeast corner as "an ornament to the town." though it seemed to him at the time to have few members.

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1880-1890 "The Greatest Show on Earth

Garfield was elected president and was assassinated the following year by a disappointed federal office seeker. Harrison succeeded. The Federal Civil Service Act was passed as a result of the assassination. Cleveland was elected in 1884, the first Democrat since the Civil War. Farm prices declined sharply, and the Interstate Commerce Act was passed. The range cattle industry dwindled and the Farmer's Alliance Movement grew. The Oklahoma Territory opened to settlers. Pulitzer invented the Sunday supplement. John L. Sullivan, the "Boston Strong Boy," went on a western tour. The first roller coaster was built at Coney Island. John L. fought Jake Kilrain near Richberg, Mississippi. Barnum merged with Bailey to produce the "Greatest Show on Earth,"and Buffalo Bill's Western spectacular boasted Annie Oakley, Sitting Bull and scores of trail-hardened cowboys. A famous lady took up residence in New York Harbor to welcome "the tired

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State Bank of Oakwood
"Good Luck on the Next 100 Years."
Oakwood, Illinois

First Grain Office and Bank

and the poor." Two young sales clerks named Marshall Field and Frank W. Woolworth quit their jobs to strike out on their own.

* * * * * *

1880 Because the old, one-story, frame school building was very worn, Fithian residents built a new two-story, brick school on the site of the present school. The Rev. Frank Poorman became M.E. pastor. The 1880 U.S. Census counted a growth of 195 in the population of Oakwood Township in ten years to 2,559.

1881 Lina Bradshaw, who was to marry Jake Knight a few years later, moved into the house on the southeast corner of Washington and Jefferson Streets, where she was to live the rest of her life. The Rev. W. H. Davis succeeded Rev. Poorman to as M.E. pastor.

1882 Rev. E. Madden was called to replace Rev. Davis.

1883 John Doney left the blacksmith shop to go into the general

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B.T.Doney and Son Groceries 1883-1924

merchandise business with John R. Thompson as partner. The Rev. W.H. Schwartz replaced Rev. Madden at the M.E. Church.

1884 John Doney left the partnership with John R. Thompson to return to the blacksmith shop. Julia Osborn (Scott, Duke) was born February 4, in Muncie. Bertha Bott (Redman) was born April 12, in southern Indiana. Mary Jane (Seymour) Meade, the wife of George W. "Grandpa" Meade, died October 14. She was born in 1832. Fannie Bantz was born in Muncie to Mr. and Mrs. Franklin Bantz. Fannie later married Winifred "Win" Myers. Grace Myers was born April 18, in Fithian to Leonard and Sarah Myers. She is a sister to Lola (Myers) Jenkins, four other sisters and five brother. The Rev. J. N. Dewell came to the M.E. pulpit for two years.

1885 William C. Youmans married Nancy Jane "Nannie" Watson, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Martin Watson, who farmed north of Fithian. Lina Bradshaw, a twin, and one of seven children of Samuel and Jane (Case) Bradshaw, Married Jake

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Danville, Illinois

Knight. They will have nine children, three of whom survive in 1970; Mrs. Belle Mapes, Mrs. Ethel Morse and Mrs. Mabel Renfro.

1886 John G. Wright worked for John Reub on the old Samuel Rawlings farm just east of the John T. Thompson farm on the Old State Road, from 1886 through 1888. They used to go to Conkeytown to mill each year from April first to the first of July. Wright was born March 3, 1869, and began "working out" when he was thirteen. Dr. William Fithian's second wife, the former Mrs. General John C. Black, died. John Hays, whose daughter, Annie M., married Elisha C. B. Fithian, died. John A Fisher was born March 14, in Fithian to Joseph and Martha (Board) Fisher. He was to have six sisters and three brothers. John is a retired farm worker. The Rev. D. A. Grime came to the M.E. Church.

1887 H. Carl "Bunt" Watkins was born June 8, at Muncie to Elija A. and Mary (Hart) Watkins. He later married Mamie Householder. "Plowboy", the celebrated show horse of England was imported to this country in March, and Samuel Dalbey, on the John McFarland farm bought "Plowshare", one of his colts. Mrs. Alvin (Elizabeth Lee) Stearns died January 23, at age 67. The Rev. N. H. Kane was welcomed to the M.E. pulpit.

1888 George W. "Grandpa" Meade married Sally A. Holt. The Rev. J. A. Burk replaced Rev. Kane at the M.E. Church. Elijah J. Boorde married Annie B. Thompson, a sister to John R., February 23. Benjamin Russell was born June 20 at Kankakee. He was to marry Mae Smith who died several years afterward. Still later he married Cora Messenger. Julia Mae Hackler was born November 10, in Raglesville, Indiana, to John D. and Susan Hackler. Julia, who later married John Williams, is a sister to Mrs. Lula Zigler.

1889 Nathaniel Mead, the father of George W. "Grandpa" Meade, died September 3. Rev. H. C. Augustus moved to the pastorate of the M.E. Church.

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Bloomington Road
Champaign, Illinois

Fithian School Built 1880

1890-1900 "The Not-So-Gay Nineties"

A major U.S. landmark, the end of the frontier, was shown by the 1890 Census. Cleveland was elected the second time, and the People's Party was created in 1892. A major depression set in, and the militia was called in several cities to squelch the organizing efforts of labor unions. The Pullman Strike shook the country, violence was rife among coal miners, Coxey's Army marched on Washington, and the Populist Party grew. Bryan won the nomination of both the Populists and the Democrats in 1896, but was defeated by McKinley. Due to pressure from the Populists, free mail delivery to homes is expanded to include *rural* homes in 1897. The following year the U.S. embarks on a course of imperialism in the War with Spain. The "traveling combination" theater proliferated, and 10 cent, 20 cent, and 30 cent "temples of amuzement" popped up everywhere. Everybody went to the melodrama: "Under the Gaslight", "Only a Working Girl", "Dangers of A Great City", etc. "Wild West" and "Indian Shows" criss-crossed the country ballyhooing

Compliments of
Ruth Sartain

"Texas Jack" Omohundro, "Wild Bill" Hickok, "Buffalo Bill" Cody, Sitting Bull and Annie Oakley. The 90's were the peak decade of the Chautauqua, for the first moving pictures were introduced in "Electric Theaters", and even the stentorian and mellifluous tones of William Jennings Bryan could not compete with this first of the "Hot" media. P.T. Barnum died of old age.

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1890 John Doney once again left his blacksmith shop, this time to begin his own general merchandising business in what is today the Grimm Restaurant building. He was also named postmaster, a position he held, except under Democratic Administrations, until 1924. The town's founder, Dr. William Fithian died April 5, at the age of 90. He would have been 91 two days later. Though very ill in his later years, he retained his strong interest in politics to the end. He even had himself carried to the polls April 1, to vote against a candidate he

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Kamp Music Shop, Inc.
428 N. Vermilion
Danville, Illinois

particularly wanted to see defeated. This man's life spans the history of the country. Born in 1799, before Washington died, he survived until 1890, the year Eisenhower was born. The Summer 1965 issue of the *Heritage* magazine, pp. 3-5, 19, has an excellent article on his life, subtitled, "Prairie Physician, Pioneer Politician, Civil War Surgeon, Close Friend of Lincoln." Daniel D. Van Buskirk bought 160 acres on the county line road west of Fithian, and a short time later he bought 36 acres nearby. Mr. Van Buskirk owned 80 to begin with. George H. Nieman cam to Fithian from Delaware, Indiana, and a few years later married Carrie M. Smith. The Rev. S. Middleton succeeded to the M.E. pulpit. The railroad, during these early years, drew water for its locomotives from a large pond on the Meade farm, the brick house at the tracks in the west of town, where Tom Harrold now lives, and pumped it to a tower near Grover Street.

1891 John R. Thompson moved from Fithian to Chicago after marrying Rose Holloway from Georgetown on August 5. Two children were born to this union, Rose and John R., Jr. John Ross Boorde was born to Elijah J. and Annie B. (Thompson) Boorde January 22. The Rev. D. G. DuBois became the M.E. preacher.

1892 Ross Scott, brother of Clarence Scott, was born December 28, at Muncie to James and Nance (Hill) Scott. Ross and Clarence had three half-brothers, two sisters, Vera and Reva, and a half-sister.

1894 The Rev. J.C. Enninger stepped into the M.E. pulpit. Lawrence W. Harry was born May 28, at Fithian to Clinton A. and Teena (Hobick) Harry. Lawrence later became a barber, married Myrl Williams and the couple had two sons. The Lysander Smoot residence, one mile northwest of Fithian, was completely rebuilt and became one of the showplace farms in this area. An 82-page volume of the M.E. Sabbath School attendance records begins January 7, 1894. The record for each Sunday is written in beautiful, flowing script by the secretary, Cora M. Post. C. B. DeLong was Superintendent and usually reviewed

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Swearingen Insurance Agency
Ogden, Illinois

Delong Elevator 1887

the week's lesson at the end of class. Attendance in 1894 varied from 16 to 59 but averaged in the forties. Collections ranged from 16 cents to 58 cents but also averaged in the forties. Four teachers and two visitors were typical On April 12, the S. S. Board met at the home of the DeLong's and elected the following officers: Supt. C. B. DeLong; Assistant Supt. Mrs. Elder; Secretary Cora Post; Assistant Secretary Maude Fisher; Treasurer Cora Post; "Librarian" (sic) Francis Thompson; Teachers: infant class, Mrs. Littell; Bible A, Mrs. Elder; Bible B, Mr. Hughes; and Bible C, Minnie DeLong. The Rev. J. C. Enninger, who came to the Fithian charge in this year, frequently took part in the lesson.

1895 Continuing its record into 1895, the M.E. Sabbath School minutes report Minnie Delong occasionally substituting for Cora M. Post as secretary, Dr. Dunn, now the Assistant Superintendent, frequently giving the lesson. Other occasionally filling in where Mrs. Enninger, Mrs. Littell, Brother Hughes,

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Muncie Super Way
Muncie, Illinois

Will Soward, O. B. Wysong, Maude Thompson, Maude Fisher, Flo Black, and Brothers Draper, Kane, and Levi Harmeson. George H. Nieman took over Lysh Chenowith's hardware and furniture store in the ground floor of the InternationalOrder of Odd Fellows Lodge Building on the southwest corner of Main and Franklin Streets, where Harold Barnes' house now stands. In later years, a succession of proprietors operated a wide variety of businesses in this venerable example of cast-iron architecture: Dreyus Thompson succeeded George Nieman, followed by Everett Price, James Chiseler and Kieth Dodson. The south side of the ground floor was occupied during the twenties and thirties by the McMorris Chevrolet agency.

1896 The Rev. J. R. Reasoner assumes leadership of the M.E. Church.

1897 The Rev. G. W. Reed follows Rev. Reasoner.

1898 A calender for the Bank of Fithian for this year lists the following bank officers: President C. B. DeLong, Cashier, O. B. Wysong. Dr. O. W. Michael, to be know affectionately as "Doc" to the ill and disabled of several generations of Fithian residents, opens his tiny, two-room office in Muncie.

1899 A photograph of the old wooden grain elevator taken this year is notable for the absence of the railroad depot. At that time the depot was across Main Street from its present site. Dr. and Mrs. O. W. Michael were married December 31, in Louisville, Ky. The Rev. W. D. McIntosh comes to the M. E. pulpit.

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1900-1910 "In My Merry Oldsmobile"

"In 1900, Oklahoma wasn't in the Union yet, Bryan was roaring about free silver, and the income tax had yet to be imposed. American troops occupied territory in the Caribbean and the Pacific. The *Ladies' Home Journal* offered advice and romance, advertising shirtwaists for women; eggs cost 12 cents a dozen, sugar was 4 cents a pound, butter 24 cents; the average work week was 59 hours; a "lady cashier" could earn eight dollars weekly while a girl "over 14, to label samples" was offered $2.50 a week. U.S. senators gave

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Ted Brinegar, Owner
Fithian, Illinois

Bantz Building Corn Festival 1908

testimonials for patent medicines. Women could vote only in four Western states. Veterans of the Civil War marched in parades. Meanwhile, in Newport, Rhode Island, where anybody who was anybody was, Cornelius Vanderbilt laid out $5 million for his summer cottage, before a stick of furniture was moved in. In North Carolina, the Wright brothers made their first, short and historic flight." The Boxer Rebellion in China occupied headlines; the Gold Standard Act was passed; McKinley was assassinated and Teddy Roosevelt became president. Wielding a big stick, he engineered a bloodless revolution in Latin America to create a new nation, Panama, with whom, by pre-arranged deal, he negotiated a canal treaty. The Panic of '07 led to demands by the Populists for federal protection of bank accounts of small depositors. Taft defeated TR's Bull Moose Party. James A. Bailey took the Barnum and Bailey Circus to Europe for a five-year tour. The first Nickelodeon in America opened in McKeesport, Pennsylvania, by John P. Harris, and

Compliments of
Danville Floral Co. and
Wilson's Hobby Shop
23-27 W. North St.
Danville, Illinois

within two years multiplied by the thousands. Every town had its silent movies, accompanied by dramatic piano playing.

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1900 Dr. Paul E. Fithian, living in the house on the southeast corner of Main and Franklin streets, decided to build a handsome brick home across Main Street (on the northwest corner) for his sister and mother. In addition, he would provide space for his doctor's office. But John Bales was living in a frame home on the site. (John operated a concrete block factory at the time on North Sherman at the railroad tracks, across the street from where "Doc" Duke's house now stands.) So Doc, Doc Fithian, that is, paid John to move his house across the alley west to the corner of Franklin and Adams Streets. While he was at it, John brick-veneered the old house, and it was later known for decades as Charley Miller's place. Half the town bought milk, cream and eggs from the Millers. Ruth Harden now lives in the brick home Doc Fithian built on the old Bales site. At the turn of the century, Fithian's "square" at the intersection of Main and Washington streets sported a large windmill in the center of the street, built over a well and surrounded by watering tanks for horses. Mr. Kiser had a shoe store on Main Street; Billy Soward had an undertaking parlor on Main at Sherman (where Logan's Implement Shop is now); Daddy Eubank had a blacksmith shop where Bob Davis now lives; there were two grain elevators, one on each side of Main at the tracks; Joe Fisher had a livery stable where Stallings Ford Garage now stands; Tom Deacon owned a Variety Store on Main at Washington where the flag pole is today; the Berlin Grocery occupied the corner where Hobick's building is now; Mrs. Littell had a hat shop in the rooms above Berlin's; Dr. Post had his office and a drug store in what is now the home of Virgil Haynes; Billy Soward later had a drug store where Virgil's filling station is. H. L. Koontz, the principal of Fithian Grade School, sought and obtained permission from the Board of Directors to add a ninth grade, the first "high school" in town. The 1900 U.S. Census reported a township population of

Compliments of
Merle Norman Cosmetic Studio
18 W. North St.
Danville, Illinois

3,318 (up 445 over the decade). For the first time, Fithian population was reported: 309. Muncie was larger: 324. Oakwood was not yet listed. The M.E. church congregation determined to build a new, brick sanctuary, and Mrs. Julia Dunn donated lots on Main at Clinton. W. D. McIntosh was pastor, and trustees were C. B. DeLong, Samual Black, Lysander Smoot, Dr. G. H. Post, James Hargan, George W. Meade, O. B. Wysong and John Moffitt. Myrtle (Burton) Meade and Nora Watkins joined the M.E. Church April 8. Julia Osborn, Muncie, married Max Scott. Isaac Tudor died. His son, John A. Tudor, rode a horse to Homer at the age of 21 and bought a drug store which he ran for sixty years.

1901 The new M. E. Church (the present building) was dedicated January 13. A sunrise prayer meeting was conducted by N. H. Kane, and the sermon at the regular service was delivered by Dr. W. H. Wilder, presiding elder. Mrs. O. B. Wysong sang a solo. Rev. S. A. McIntosh led the evening song and prayer service after the Epworth League Meeting from 6:00 to 6:30 p.m. Clara (Bailey) VanBuskirk, wife of Daniel D. VanBuskirk, died and her funeral was the first to be held in the new sanctuary. A souvenir of a Christmas program at the Grade School lists Lurene C. Spear as teacher, D. N. Draper as Board clerk, J. H. Hughes as president, and J. S. Cromwell as member. There were 43 pupils:

Cecil Robertson
Earl Henderson
David Mead
Mont Fisher
Tommy Bailey
Paul Casteel
Joyce McIntosh
Frank Ellis
Herman Reeder
George Casteel
Lessie Bailey
Goldie Kirkpatrick
Hazel Fisher
Agnes Casteel
Frannie Morris
Marie McIntosh
Ethel Knight
Florence Gohn
Pearl Eubank
Polly Henderson
Mamie Smith
Bernice Yoho
Veda Bollein
Laura Turnbaugh
Elsie Bollein
John Harmeson
Verlah Meade
Vera Gohn
Maude Knight
Ora Hughes
Earl Dalbey
Frank Berlin
Carl Reynolds
Jamie Draper
Earl Myers
Flavil Ward
Iden Goings
Mertie Morris
Carrie Smith
Carrie Walters
Nina Randall
Vera McIntosh
Wintress Thompson

Compliments of
Catlin IGA Foodliner
Catlin, Illinois

Fithian Horse Show 1909

Principal A. M. Shaw sought and obtained permission from the Board of Directors to add a tenth year of instruction, thus making a two-year high school.

1902 Dr. Post, M.D., besides owning the drug store and operating a medical practice, farmed three 160-acre tracts. In addition, he farmed where Paul Jolley now lives and where Marvin Saathoff now lives. He had an office in the drug store, but his main business was as physician to a huge number of rural clients in the surrounding countryside. L. D. "Props" Watkins recalls that before his brother died in 1902, Dr. Post made daily house calls at their home at DeLong Station (the elevator at Routes 49 and 150). The Watkins' home, at that time, was west of the elevator and back in the field south of 150. Dr. Post lived where Prof. and Mrs. Julian Steward now reside, across Main Street from the school. Saint Moffett worked in the drug store for Dr. Post and operated a jewelry store in the front. He later married Dr. Post's daughter, Cora. He was also

Compliments of
Gerald D. Meade
Standard Oil Agent
Fithian, Illinois

very active in the town band, whose peak years seem to have been the late 'teens and early twenties. Peter Redman and Bertha Bott were married this year and moved to St. Joseph, but after a short time, moved to Fithian where Larry Knight now lives. Sadie Watkins joined the M.E. Church September 4. The Rev. Gillmore came to the M.E. pulpit to commence one of the two longest tenures in the history of the church, 1902-08. The Church prospered greatly under this man's leadership, and he received a correspondingly high salary of $900 a year. Principal J. D. Henderson sought and received from the Board, permission to add an 11th year of instruction at the Fithian Grade-High School. Winifred Myers married Fannie Bantz February 3. There were to have four children: W. Glenn, Claude, Zelma and Winifred.

1903 The Illinois Traction Railroad (ITR) was completed from Danville to Champaign, and A. E. "Art" Cromwell was on the first ITR car to enter Danville from the west on September 5. John R. Thompson, who left Fithian several years earlier, had 10 restaurants in Chicago, a 4-story wholesale building and 500 employees. O. E. Bantz bought out the O. H. Berlin Store in March for $2,000. This was located in the Graham Building on the northeast corner of Main and Washington streets, the present site of Hobick's Fertilizer Store. H. B. Kingsbury became principal of Fithian Grade and High School and was retained through 1905. The High School was now a three-year institution and students who wished to complete their fourth year attended Danville High School, commuting on the ITR. The 1903 graduating class of F. H. S. consisted of H. Guy Smith and Ethel A. Post. Our area was brought tragically to national prominence July 25, as a result of a riot, storming of both city and county jails and a lynching in Danville. Sheriff Hardy Whitlock and his deputies, among whom was Bill Helmick who lived on Adams Street behind what is now Grimm's Restaurant in Fithian, became overnight national heroes for staving off the attack on the county jail. For several weeks, Danville was occupied by National Guard Troops from

Compliments of
Berry Farm & Home Store, Inc.
2807 N. Vermilion
Danville, Illinois

their summer encampment at Lincoln. Most of the rioters were coal miners and farm laborers, and of the 30 brought to trial, 13 received prison sentences of varying lengths.

1904 At about this time, the town hired Mack Ward to build a brick jail on the west side of Main Street adjacent to the sidewalk between the I.O.O.F. Building and what is now the George VanBuskirk residence. It was a small, one-roomed affair with no glass, only bars, at the window. After it had been completed, but unused, for some time, Mack got in a fight one night and found himself faced with a jail sentence. Many people offered to go his bond, but he refused, rather hankering to initiate the calaboose he himself had built. Joe Fisher, who worked on construction, took Mack's meals to him. Children, coming home from school, frequently stopped to peek in the window at Mack, and occasionally taunts and jeers were exchanged. Daniel D. VanBuskirk bought the farm at Conkeytown later worked by George D. VanBuskirk, who recently retired and moved into the former Harold Barnes' residence. Daniel later added to the original farm. Clyde L. Meade was born June 6, to Isaac and Minerva Meade. He is a brother to Mrs. Howard (Mary Meade) King. Mrs. Edna Gillmore, the M.E. Pastor's wife, organized the Women's Foreign Missionary Society (WFMS) and was its first president. The WFMS had a membership of 25, and one member, Mrs. Carrie M. Harry, was secretary-treasurer for 36 years. The 1904 school graduation program listed H. B. Kingsbury as still principal; Nellie Weisiger as teacher, intermediate department; Edna Crawson as teacher, primary department; and the following 35 pupils:

Ruth DeLong	Carrie Smith	May Scott
Grace Casteel	Lessie Bailey	Wintress Thompson
Belle Knight	Mertie Morris	Agnes Casteel
Dean Draper	Elsie Ballein	Nellie Scott
Clyde Doney	Nannie Williams	Pearl Eubank
Kenton West	Glimmia Daniels	Frannie Morris
George Myers	Davie Meade	Jessie Hunt
Harry Morris	Earl Henderson	Blanche Goodwin
Carrie Walters	Archie Vanderwark	Lilian Orton
Ina Vanderwark	Earl Dalbey	Mont Fisher

Tommie Bailey	Cecil Robertson	Charlie Bradbury
Paul Casteel	Howard Williams	

During the summer, W. F. Spear was engaged as principal, and he was retained through the 1909-10 school year. 1904 graduates of Fithian High School were George Earl Post and Elton Elder.

1905 George H. Nieman, father of Floyd and Ivan, built the large victorian home now occupied by the Freeman's on the southwest corner of Franklin and Adams Streets. In his hardware and furniture store in the old I.O.O.F. Building, horse collars were a fast-moving item in his inventory. Mrs. Cora "Code" Hampton joined the M.E. Church December 17. A souvenir Christmas greeting of the M.E. Sunday School Class No. 2, lists Maude Littell, teacher, W.F. Gillmore as pastor, and C. B. DeLong as superintendent. Members include:

Muriel Linn	Sylvia Hart	Mae Scott
Mamie Smith	Elva Reeves	Hazel Fisher
Pearl Eubank	Ferris Fox	Bessie Freeman
Bertha Boorde	Flavel Ward	Gertie Sawyer
Agnes Casteel	Bernice Yoho	Minnie Hart
Carl Reynolds	Fred McBroom	George Freeman
Asa Payne		

The 1905 graduating class of FHS consisted of Mabel Alice Householder.

1906 Doris L. Fisher was born April 24, to Joe and Martha (Boorde) Fisher. Joe Fisher was the first town constable. He lived in a frame home, the present site of Ed William's home, and farmed the entire Fithian Farm. For this purpose he kept 20-25 head of mules in a barn behind the house (about where Delbert Cunningham's house is now). Mr. Eyestone later farmed this ground. Central and Ogden were separated from the M.E. Circuit, Fithian becoming a station. There were no graduates this year of FHS. On June 17, a raging inferno burned out the entire block on Main Street now occupied by the Post Office and Stallings Garage. Wiped out were a grocery store, Jim Savage's barber shop, an implement building, Samuel Hart's livery stable, a millinery store, and a

slaughterhouse and butcher shop. Fire-fighting equipment included only buckets handed, brigade-fashion, from the town well. Later, a two-wheeled cart with a small tank and a hand-pump was secured. Lafayette "Lafe" Morris was dray-man at the livery stable. Lois Decker was born December 31, the daughter of Jim and Gertie (Scott) Decker. Lois later had two sisters and six brothers, including George, Vaughn and Bessie.

1907 The Illinois Terminal Railroad was extended west from Champaign to Decatur. O. E. Bantz built a new 2-story and basement brick store on the site of the present Cromwell's Store. The 1907 graduating class of FHS consisted of Iona S. Plotner. At about this time, a newly-graduated physician from Kankakee County set up practice in Hope, married Dora Butz of the Butz-Tillotson clan, and proceeded to rear a remarkable family that ultimately included two Pulitzer Prize winners, Carl and Mark Van Doren. Dr. Van Doren became familiar sight to Fithian residents as he frequently brought patients here or to DeLong Station to board the ITR for hospitalization in Champaign. The Spring, 1969, issue of the *Heritage* contains an excellent article on *An Illinois Boyhood*, a separately published section of Carl Van Doren's autobiography.

1908 The Rev. J. L. Minney replaced Rev. Gillmore in the M.E. pulpit, but before Rev. Gillmore left, his wife, Edna, organized the Ladies' Onward Bible Class. Mrs. Elizabeth Littell was the first teacher. March 4, a great Revival Meeting was held under Captains Ruth and Holmquests and the Hutchinson Cadets, sisters Ethel and Lydia. On July 12, the following persons joined the M.E. Church; Mrs. Gladys Elliott, Mrs. Julia Covert, Mrs. Lola Jenkins, Mrs. Murza Rutan, and L. Dwight Watkins. A. E. Cromwell and Grace Bennett were married September 16. O. E. Bantz moved into his new brick store and opened for business. a 1908 photograph shows the building festooned with decorations of corn ears and stalks for the Harvest Corn Festival. Ed and Frank Jenkins later had a shoe shop in the

The Old Bakery Building

Ford Garage

north one-half of the ground floor of the Bantz Building. Louis Hendricks, Muncie, married Mamie Grace Green February 12, in Danville. Their son, Clyde, operated a grocery in Muncie for many years, and their daughter, Julia, became the wife of Harold Bedinger, a pastor at the Fithian Church of the Nazarene in the 1940's.

1909 A calender plate for this year advertises "W.A. Wray, Groceries-Meats-Work Clothing, Fithian, Ill." Bill Wray operated a restaurant and butcher shop where "Chevy" Vaughn's building is now. He used to butcher his own meat in the alley behind the store. Wray lived where Bob Davis now lives. Wray's son-in-law Alvy Sweitzer, appears in a 1909 photo selling cigars in the store. Alvy's daughter, Claudine, is the mother of Dr. J. L. Gulick, Muncie, Illinois. The Rev. J. Dugan became the M.E. pastor. FHS graduates were Mamie Ellen Householder and Elizabeth Ellice Smoot. Don Albert was born November 17, in Collison to Fred E. and Gladiola (Wilson) Albert. Carl Wayne "Punk" Strong was born November 22 in Fithian to Delmar Harvey and Cora (Redman) Strong.

* * * * *

1910-1920 "Don't Be A Slacker!"

"This was the decade of the militant suffragette, of warnings not to be a slacker in the "war to end war," and of people Turkey-trotting to "Alexander's Ragtime Band" (which sold a million copies in sheet music in a year) at Reisenweber's, where jazz was introduced to New York. Black Jack Pershing set off on the trail of Pancho Villa in northern Mexico. Arizona and New Mexico entered the Union. Ford's Model T began rolling off the assembly line and within two years had become the "Universal Car" and the butt of countless jokes. There were cheers when a plane first flew cross-country (49 days) and gasps when the N.Y. Yankees paid $125,000 for Babe Ruth. The Panama Canal opened. Barney Oldfield drove a car at 131.7 mph. We were reading the first Tarzan stories, Robert Frost's first poems, Zane Grey's *The U.P. Trail* and *Riders of the Purple Sage*. Kodak's pocket camera was in every tourist's hand; and at the

movies, we chuckled at Chaplin, were vamped by Theda Bara and kept teetering on the edges of our seats as *The Perils of Pauline* reached the climax of another episode. Our women were warned about mashers and the size of their hats. Culture came to the hinterlands via the Chautauquas, traveling tent shows serving up acrobats, tragediennes and rousing, inspirational speakers." The Postal Savings Bank System was adopted as a result of Populist pressure. The Standard Oil Trust was dissolved. Wilson was elected, and the Parcel Post System was adopted. Originally a Populist demand, even orthodox Republicans eventually supported it. The Clayton Anti-Trust Act was passed, and World War I began in Europe. The *Lusitania* was sunk, Wilson was re-elected, and the U.S. entered the war. There was revolution in Russia, and an armistice in the West. John Ringling persuaded a war-troubled nation they needed circuses.

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First Bank of Fithian 1912

Fithian High School

1910 Doc Fithian built a fine, brick residence next door to his office, the present C. A. "Pat" Patterson Home. The Revs. Taylor and Jackson held a tent meeting on the Pete Smith property to organize a Church of the Nazarene. The following persons joined the M.E. Church July 24; Floyd Nieman, T. Ace Payne, Charles Thompson, Mrs. Susie Watson, and Mrs. Lenore Payne. William Birdzell was the school principal. The 1910 graduating class from FHS included Edna Mae Exton, Grace Mae Casteel, and Anna Myrtle Amick. John Williams married Julie Mae Hackler December 10, in Terre Haute, Indiana. The 1910 U.S. Census reported a loss of 546 in the township, down to 2,772; a growth of 77 in Fithian, to 386; a loss of 73 in Muncie, to 251; and a listing for the first time of Oakwood at 423.

1911 Mr. and Mrs. William Cannon contributed a lot for the site of a Nazarene Church sanctuary. Rev. E. O. Clark became the M.E. pastor. O.E. Bantz was named Postmaster, a position he held until 1921. Levitt Jenkins married Minnie Bantz and they

commenced farming on the family homestead on Rt. 49. His parents moved to the house on Main Street presently occupied by the John Swick family. V. W. McIntire was school principal and the three-year high school continued. Mr. McIntire was a 1906 graduate of Potomac High School and a 1909 graduate of Northwestern University. There were no FHS graduates in 1911.

1912 This was a year of building in Fithian. The DeLong-Building, to later house a bank, an auto agency and a farm implement dealer, was constructed on the site of the 1906 fire. William C. Youmans was responsible for most of the construction work. The Church of the Nazarene was organized under the leadership of Rev. Rolla C. Morgan, and a cement block sanctuary was constructed on Jefferson St. FHS curriculum was shortened from three to two years in order to standardize the work. The length of the school year was also lengthened from eight to nine months. High School was taught by Principal V. W. McIntire and was made equivalent to the first two years of the regular four-year curriculum. Graduates were allowed to enter regular high school as juniors without examinations and were given full credit for the work completed here. Ferris Fox was the FHS graduate in 1912. George H. Nieman sold his furniture and hardware store business.

1913 The 1912 building boom continued. A brick ITR depot was built, after moving the house on that site to the northeast corner of Washington and Adams Streets, across the alley west from what is now Cromwell's Grocery. The first ITR agent at the new depot was a Mr. Foster, then Mr. Randall, followed by Dave "Tab" Shreeves, and finally by Ralph Day, the agent in charge when the line ceased operating in 1946. Ed Harden came to Fithian from Covington, Indiana, as salesman in C. B. DeLong's Ford garage. Ed and Ruth first lived in the house now occupied by Bill Cushwa. Lev and Minnie Jenkins moved to the Boorde homestead one mile northwest of Fithian as tenants. The Rev. David F. Nelson served in the M.E. pastorate at a salary of $1,200 per year. the 1913 graduating class of FHS included Bernice Yoho, Clyde Ray, Clyde Shepherd,

Lucy Douglas, Cora Steffey, Minnie Steffey and Hazel Shepherd. May 30, a group of FHS graduates formed an Alumni Association, and determined that there were 19 FHS graduates, including the 1913 class. The following officers were elected: President Bernice Yoho ('13); Secretary Elizabeth Smoot ('09); Treasurer Clyde Shepherd ('13). Blue and white were chosen as the official school colors, and the following alumni were elected to various committees: Grace Casteel, Mamie (Householder) Watkins, Anna Amick, Hazel Shepherd, Mabel (Householder) Reeves and Lois Wysong. The first reunion was to be held in 1914 during commencement week. Ed Barnes' parents moved to their present farm in 1913. Ed's grandfather had settled southeast of Gifford, near Hope, in 1868 and had a family of 13 children.

1914 The Lysander Smoot residence, where Paul and Virginia (Smoot) Loeffler now reside, was totally destroyed by fire March 17. The home had been a showplace in this part of the county and headquartered a large cattle-raising industry. The Smoots moved into Fithian in the recently-moved house on Washington and Adams, where Paul and Kay (Jenkins) Sharpf now live. The Smoot children included Gertie, Clara, Virgie, Nora, Charles, and Elizabeth. Mrs. Ed (Nora Smoot) Huckin recalls that their recreation consisted mostly of church, visiting relatives and grand Fourth-of-July celebrations. Volume I, "*F.H.S., The Memoir 1914*", is published. V. W. McIntire was still principal, and the Board of Directors included President Arthur Lowman, Clerk W. F. Spear and Member Dr. Paul H. Fithian. First-year students enrolled in Algebra, Latin, Greek and Roman History and English. Second-year coursework included Plane Geometry, Latin (Ceasar), Botany and English. Class officers were President Lois Wysong, Secretary Clarence DeLong, and Treasurer Lewis Thompson. Purple and gold were the class colors. Freshman class officers were President George Fithian, Secretary Elizabeth Smoot, and Treasurer Lylyan Soward. Two other freshmen class members were photographed, but unnamed. Baccalaureate was held in the M.E. Church May 25, with Rev. F. B. Madden, Supt., Illinois M.E.

Conference, delivering the sermon. A. J. Thompson offered the inovcation. Graduation was held May 30, also in the M.E. Church. Eleven businesses in Fithian advertised in the *FHS Memoir*:

(1) DeLong and Wysong, General Agents, Champaign and Vermilion Counties, Fithian, Illinois, for the Peoria Life Insurance Company, Peoria, Illinois. Emmet C. May, President; O. B. Wysong, Sec. Tr. "Issues the Best Policies, and under the supervision of the State of Illinois. Are you a Total Abstainer? If so, insure in the Company which gives YOU the benefit of the savings in the death rate due you."

(2) R. W. McBroom, Real Estate and Insurance, Phone 15

(3) Doney & Son, Fithian, Illinois, phone 10, Grocery Orders: "When you give an order at this store you can absolutely rest assured that the order will be filled -- no substitution or carelessness. We will please you. Give us a trial order. Let us show how we know how to please you."

(4) C. B. DeLong, First Bank of Fithian, "Your Patronage Solicited" Jeffery Motor Cars (Formerly Rambler), Ford Motor Cars, Repairing and Supplies a Specialty.

(5) D. S. Thompson, Hardware, Stoves, Tinware, Pumps, Fithian, Illinois.

(6) Soward's Pharmacy, Drugs, Paints, Oils, Glass and Wall Paper, Lynn's line of Patents, Eyes tested free, Tailor-made clothes to order.

(7) Illinois Traction System (McKinley Lines) always "The Road of Good Service"

(8) D. J. Bantz & Son, Fithian, Illinois, Make our store your business home. It will help us, and give you a better stock to select from. It is up to you. Yours for a better business.

(9) Geo. F. Lee & Co., Lumber and Building Material of *QUALITY*

(10) L. R. Hendricks, Notions, Confectionery, Cigars and Tobacco, Fithian, Illinois

(11) Let FREEMAN Supply Your Wants in HARDWARE: HARNESS and FURNITURE, phone 17, Fithian, Illinois.

1915 The Rev. W. A. Boyd is called to the M.E. pulpit, but before Rev. David F. Nelson left, he began work on a "History" of Methodism in this area. The data he collected were presented in a series of four sermons during the summer. In 1970, Mrs. Herbert (Lorine Jenkins) Thornton, of Sarasota, Florida possessed this handwritten manuscript. William C. Youmans commenced operating "The Farmer's Elevator" at Rumpler (in which he had a financial interest) and the C. B. DeLong grain elevator at DeLong Station, or Watkins' Crossing. A photograph taken this year of the west side of Main Street looking south from the square shows the Deacon Flat Building (where the flagpole is today), James a Savage's 5 and 10 cent store on the corner; next on the south Bob Boorde's barber shop; Dick McBroom's restaurant; Doney's house; Doney's store; across the alley the hardware store, DeLong's Ford garage; the Fithian State Bank; and across North Sherman Street the elevator. The 1915 plat of Oakwood Township shows landholders still dominated by the name William E. Fithian, but now the names Paul H. and Anna are added to the Patriach's, William E. Other prominent landholders appearing for the first time include:

C. G. Patterson
J. S. Bowen
W. H. Reams
L. Smoot
Wm. Hart
M. Dalby
R. Myers
Frank Brady
J. A. Richards
Sam Payne
Clara Brale
C. Harry
F. W. McCullough
C. J. Ludwig
Jos. Musson
W. M. Cathcart
Pricilla Divan
Mary E. Busey
W. H. Webster
Albert Shepherd
A. H. Loeffler
Richard Plotner
Sanford Kreager
W. Jenkins
D. R. Duke
D. J. Bantz
C. R. Price
Jas. Freeman
Geo. M. Porter
W. E. Womacks
Harriet Jenkins
Lillie Doney
J. D. Pulliam
H. G. Otis
Wm. Lynch
G. H. Post
Marietta Tawney
Mary E. Watkins
Chas. Crouch
M. A. LeFever
Ida M. Jenkins
B. W. S. Page
Sam'l Littler
J. S. Purnell
T. S. Mapes
J. B. Skinner
P. T. Crouch
Cora Johnson
Wm. Cronkhite
Grace Dekay
Maggie Shutt
Mos. Morehouse
Ed. Stevens
Dan Clapp

W. C. Youmans
Nancy Morehouse
Minerva Gurley
N. L. Bales
Wm. Parris
E. R. Fellow
J. F. Walker
Jas. Marron
Grace Myers
W. F. Eichorst
J. Scott
D. D. VanBuskirk
Joseph Bailey
E. A. Watkins
J. Hannah
J. C. Sheldon

1916 Route 10 (150, today) was constructed as a single-lane slab. Along its Danville-Champaign route, the highway crossed the Big Four railroad tracks 13 times. The Littell's bought out the Thompson Grocery Store. The doors of Oakwood Township High School opened, and classes were to begin. Dr. O. W. Michael, President of the Board, was instrumental in engineering what was certainly *one* of the first and may well be *the* first consolidated high school district in the country. Few other high schools can boast such a beautiful, naturally landscaped campus. But the triumph turned to tragedy. The entire faculty, three teachers, were walking to school along the ITR tracks (route 10 was under construction) and, while crossing the ITR bridge over Stony Creek, failed to hear an approaching interurban due to the sound of a passing freight train on the parallel tracks. All three were killed.

1917 Mrs. Lysander (Ann Eliza Randall) Smoot died August 9, at the age of 64. William E. Jenkins died February 12. L. Dwight and Mae Watkins were married June 14. Their children include Carlisle, Coleta (Griffin) and Lucille (Walter). Lawrence W. Harry married Myrl Williams July 18. They had two sons, Don, who is a Champaign County Official, and another who was killed in World War II. 1917 was the peak year of service for the ITR. Three-car trains covered the Springfield-Danville circuit. It was the only interurban line the country operating sleeping cars. On July 3, Pete Redman erected a hugh flagpole in the town square for a giant celebration the next day. Hundreds of people turned out, and Pete collected a sizeable sum of money from citizens to honor the nation's veterans. Pete was himself, a veteran of the Spanish-American War. It was about this time that the Redman's moved to the Gilly McMorris house on Main Street.

1918 At about this time, one of the most popular business establishments was a tavern in the west part of town. Long before bottled beer, much less cans, people brought their own containers and were sold draught beer by the bucket. On hot summer days, the pail rushed often to the old saloon spigot. George Otis worked for "Daddy" Eubanks in the blacksmith shop. He also worked for Bud Nutterfield in the implement shop where the old Bank Building (Post Office) is now. Mandy, George's wife, like many another woman, used to clean house by the week. Well, it just got awfully danged hot in a blacksmith shop in July. And after a pail or so of suds, it got pretty durn sleepy. So folks knew, when the shop seemed abandoned, to climb up in the loft and give George a good shake. Definitely by 1918 and perhaps earlier, Fithian merchants were collectively supporting free Saturday night outdoor movies. J. LeRoy "Mike" Cannon was projectionist. The Fithian Community Band was very active during this period and will be discussed below. The Rev. Ulysses M. Creath came to the M.E. Church and died in his pastorate here.

1919 Pete and Bertha Redman bought the homeplace where George and Maenette (Redman) Schingle now live. Rev. John W. Starr comes to the M.E. pastorate and receives $1,250 per year salary. Frank Perry returned from France at the end of the war and moved to Fithian from Rankin. Here he lived in a boarding house run by John and Olive (Otis) Rueb after they retired from farming. Mrs. Cammerer, first grade teacher to generations of Fithian residents, also stayed there while she taught here. So well known was the good food served at the Rueb's that many salesmen made it a point to reach the Rueb's for the noon meal. Mrs. Pearl (Rueb) Richards, Homer, and Mrs. Alice (Rueb) Blacker, Urbana, are their daughters. Mrs. Florence (Richards) Michener is their granddaughter. John Rueb was brought to the Central neighborhood by his parents from Ohio when he was nine years old in 1863. John and his wife later worked the Busey and Thompson farms south of Fithian. The Rueb boarding house was across Clinton

Street north of the M.E. Church, where the "Leck" Knights later lived for many years.

* * * * *

Farm Machinery Early 1920's

1920-1930 "It Ain't Gonna Rain No More"

"The Great War was over. The boys came marching up Fifth Avenue to unemployment, Prohibition, a Communist scare, "daring" movies, a revived Ku Klux Klan. A crowd of more than a hundred thousand paid a record gate to watch Tunney beat Dempsey after Dempsey had beaten Carpentier before eighty thousand fans. Florida swamp land turned into gold. Valentino died. So did Sacco and Vanzetti after a famous trial. KDKA was the first radio station in the land, and among the new galaxy of stars were Rudy Vallee and Graham McNamee. Great figures of sport emerged – Red Grange, Helen Wills, the Four Horsemen of Notre Dame, Gertrude Ederle, who swam the Channel. Richard E. Byrd flew over the South Pole, and Lindy flew the Atlantic. Mah-Jongg and crossword puzzles were

the rage. Feathered and fringed, Bessie Smith became the "Empress of the 'Blues'" and, in New York, blue bloods and critics stormed Carnegie Hall to hear the premier of Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*. Girls hummed "It Ain't Gonna Rain No More" while they strummed ukes, smoked cigarettes and wore dresses so short that Utah wanted to pass a bill that would imprison a woman who wore skirts higher than three inches above the ankle. In winter, girls donned cloche hats and floppy galoshes; in summer it was short skirts, turned down hose and powdered knees. The stock market just climbed and climbed and then ran out of steam." Tennessee entertained the nation with its "Monkey" trial of Scopes.

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Main Street Fithian

1920 Harry "Mac" McAlister built the first radio set in Fithian. The call letters for his station were W9AMO. Frank Perry took the Civil Service examination for mail carrier for Rural Route No. 2. He passed and was appointed in June. Daniel D. VanBuskirk

died. Daniel had amassed over 800 acres of farm land. George W. "Grandpa" Meade's second wife, Sally A. (Holt), Meade, died. The U.S. Census showed a 271 gain in township population to 3,043; Fithian increased 96 to 482; Muncie held its own, down 3 to 248; and Oakwood spurted ahead 150 to 573. In the early 1920's, there were two banks in town, the First Bank of Fithian (in the present Post Office Building) and the Farmer's State Bank (across Main Street from present-day Kirby's Funeral Home). At some early but unknown date when the need for a bank was felt, C. B. DeLong, who then owned the elevator, and Sam Hart agreed to cooperate in such an undertaking. Mr. DeLong built a structure to house the bank (the old grain office destroyed when the present one was built), and Mr. Hart said he's stand good for the money. Hart, who had one of the largest farms in this area two miles northwest of town, drove into Fithian and rode the early train to Danville to get $1,000 from the bank. He noticed two men standing outside the Danville bank while he was getting the money, and they followed him a long distance as he walked back to Fithian along the railroad tracks. Fortunately, nothing happened. It was dark when he returned, so he took the money to Mr. DeLong's home (where the Ted Brinegar's now live). Mr. DeLong developed the habit of taking the money from the bank home each night for safekeeping, and people knew of this. One night, he heard prowlers downstairs, so he got the money, quietly slipped out the back door and hid outside. The intruders located Mrs. DeLong and the children upstairs. She pleaded with them to leave, which they finally did after taking her watch and jewelry. But the money was safe. Bill Wray, Dr. Gulick's grandfather, lived across the street from the bank. He awoke one night and heard robbers at the bank. He fired a gun at them, but they fired back with a shotgun, breaking windows in the house. Bill put up no more defense, but the robbers left empty-handed. One day there was a fire behind the butcher shop (the Chevy Vaughn building), and while virtually everyone in town was fighting the fire, the

Farmer's State Bank across Main Street from the butcher shop was robbed of $2,000 to $3,000. Sam Hart's farm, about 400 acres, situated between the Ivan Sadler and Ed Harper farms of today, had huge granaries, and Sylvia (Hart) Youmans recalls playing as a child on top of mountainous piles of corn. He also maintained cattle shipping pens in town along the railroad west of the elevator. Sam had extensive steam-operated grain threshing machinery, great lumbering machines that he would bring into Fithian to load onto railroad freight cars for shipment out west each year. He would follow the wheat harvest north from Kansas into Canada. Sam invested in a considerable number of Canadian wheat farms. Unfortunately, high taxes, poor markets and other factors resulted in severe financial reverses. The old frame schoolhouse on Washington at Adams, sold when the brick school was built, had been used as a residence, first by James Hargan and later by Tom Gritten. At some time in the early 1920's, Tom, who ran a garage in the livery stable, moved the old schoolhouse to the northwest corner of town at the end of Grover Street. Maude Knight was an early operator at the Central Exchange. A photo from about this period shows her at the switchboard, at that time in the house where "Code" Hampton now lives.

1921 Herbie Renfro, who moved to Fithian this year, recalls that Route 10 was a single-lane slab poured from Route 49 to Fithian before the other sections were constructed. O. E. Bantz was replaced as Postmaster by John Doney in the perennial musical chairs of national politics. 1921 was marred by a tragic auto accident in which Dorothy Williams, 19, was killed. Four high school seniors in an auto trip April 24, failed to negotiate Runyan Hill. Others in the party were Goldie Strong, Howard Smith, Homer, and Albert Alexander, Fairmount. Businesses from Fithian advertising in vol. V, OTHS *Acorn* included E. A. Jenkins, General Repair Work; G. E. Littell, Insurance; A. F. Dunn, Drug Store; Charles Plotner, Hardware; H. M. Nutterfield, Groceries; D. J. Bantz, General Merchandise; Kavanaugh's Kandy Kitchen; E. E. Freeman,

Hardware; B. T. Doney & Son, Groceries; J. W. Stucky, East Side Grocery; Farmer's State Bank; R. H. McAllister, E. E. Freeman, Leo Freese, O. E. Bantz, W. F. Spear; C. B. DeLong Motor Company advertising a 2-passenger sports roadster for $465 and Fordson Tractor for $655; and the First State Bank of Fithian.

1922 "Uncle" George W. Meade died February 8 at age 95. He was born March 20, 1827, married Mary Jane Seymour February 3, 1848, and was the father of 15 children, 11 of whom survived infancy. Raymond C. Payne was born November 14 in Fithian to Clarence and Hazel (Fisher) Payne. The Rev. A. N. Simmons comes to the M.E. Church at a salary of $1,800 per year. John D. Cromwell, father of A. E. "Art" Cromwell, bought the grocery store from Win Myers on October 22. Besides Art, the family included Winfield, Leon, Lena and Wilma. The family lived on a farm northwest of town, and Art remembers having seen old Route 49 so muddy it required four horses to pull a two-wheeled cart. Art was on the first ITR trip to Danville in 1903 and also remembers the first appendicitis operation in this area.

1923 Roy Shelton was transferred to the Fithian Exchange by the Vermilion County Telephone Company. The Exchange, about this time, was moved to the house now occupied by Van Rice. The Earl Gritten family (including Earl, Minnie and children Lorraine, Vinson and Mervin) moved to Fithian in the fall after living at Hope for many years. Earl bought the Price-Plotner Hardware Store, formerly owned by Ed. Freeman. They sold hardware, tin goods, plumbing, furniture, tractors, threshing machines and other farm equipment.

1924 John Doney sold out his general merchandise store and retired. Simon Lark was named Postmaster. (He may have had the postmastership until O. E. Bantz regained it in 1935, or there may have been others in the twelve-year period – this is uncertain.) The Gritten Hardware and Implement Business was gounded. The Rev. Roy Tomlison became the M.E. pastor. A great celebration was held in Fithian in 1924 in connection

with Ed Harden's taking over the reins of the C. B. DeLong Ford agency. Ed gave away a new Ford in a raffle, Mrs. Britt rode horseback in a parade, and the Town Band played on an old hay-rack for a stage. Band members included Win Myers, conductor; Harmon Dalbey; the Mapes twins, Lester and Chester; Ivan Nieman; Carl "Bunt" Watkins; Guy Clinesmith, drums; Elton Elder, horn; and Saint Moffett, who organized the band and played the horn. The old town jail was torn down by Mike Cannon and his sons. They used the brick in putting a basement under and generally remodeling the family home (where Jim Wendell now lives).

1925 O. E. Bantz sold his grocery store to W. W. Carter from Penfield on January 1, and bought 137 acres near Armstrong, but did not move there. Oscar worked for the Illinois Power and Light Company for five months and helped on the financial drive for Riley Hospital in Indianapolis, Indiana. The Rev. Arthur Miles was called to the M.E. pulpit.

1927 The Rev. C. F. Nagel came to the M.E. Church. O. E. Bantz bought the Standard Oil service station on Route 10. Tragedy strikes at Rt. 49 and 10 as two interurban cars collide on the ITR tracks. Fourteen were killed. Doc Michaels and Elsie McAlister administered first aid to the injured.

1928 Lysander Smoot died at the age of 92. The Rev. Ralph W. Fitch assumed leadership of the M.E. Church. Fithian advertising in vol. XII of the OTHS *Acorn* include Fithian Hardware Co.; Illinois Traction Co.; J. D. Cromwell, General Merchandise; Ed Harden, For Service; Farmer's State Bank, $25,000 Capital; O. E. Bantz, MAY-PULL-IN Standard Service Station; Boord Bros., Biggest Little Store; and Hunter Lumber Co.

1929 Guilford "Gilly" Ora McMorris died December 18 at the age of 53. Pete Redman died in December.

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1930-1940 "The Party's Over"

"The stock market continued to crash as the Depression began. Walt Disney animated seven dwarfs. Dillinger and "Baby Face"

Fithian Hardware Co. 1930's

Nelson robbed the banks, F.D.R. closed them. We read about Okies in *The Grapes of Wrath*, listened to *Amos 'n' Andy* and *Our Gal Sunday* on the Red and Blue networks, hummed "Begin the Beguine" and danced the "Big Apple" when Count Basie, Arti Shaw and Benny Goodman came to town. Orson Welles frightened us with his "Martian invasion" broadcast. Bobby Jones swept all four major British and U.S. golf titles. Gehrig battled The Babe for hitting records. J. P. Morgan dangled a midget on his knee. Pinball machines paid the rent for the corner drug store. Amelia Earhart vanished and Sally Rand appeared at the Chicago World's Fair in a few feathers and a smile. Rockefeller Center began rising and Prohibition was interred. Labor found its voice and perfected the sit-down strike. Eight million New York World's Fair goers watched the spectacle of Billy Rose's dazzling "Aquafemmes." Among the colorful figures on the political scene; Huey Long, Boss Crump, Father Coughlin and "Mother" Bloor." Fifteen million or 25 per cent of the labor force were unemployed. The banks took a holiday, and the New Deal

began. Social Security was born; the CIO broke from the AFL; the Spanish Civil War offered a testing ground for WW-II; FDR was elected to a second and then a third term; Japan attached North China while the Nazi Annschluz overran Austria with the Blitzkrieg.

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1930 Oakwood Township and all the villages within its lost population during the 20's. The 1930 U.S. Census reported Fithian down 21 to 461; Muncie lost 24 to 222; Oakwood decreased 36 to 537; and the township dropped 148 to 2,895. Dr. C. A. Cox had his veterinarian's office where Logan's Implements is now. The Rev. Ernest Dulings led the M.E. flock. During the 30's the Peoria and Eastern Railroad's Train No. 90 carried whiskey from the Peoria distilleries to Indianapolis. It was an express, stopping only at Urbana to change crews, and, in spite of being the line's fastest train, it was frequently hijacked. So the P & E placed detectives aboard – it was a real cloak and dagger affair. Number 90 became known as "Whiskey Dick." The hijackers operated with great coordination: the train would be forced to stop at a crossing by blockading the tracks with a bonfire; trucks would be waiting; and the cargo was transferred, all with great dispatch. "Whiskey Dick" flew through Fithian around midnight. Area businesses advertising in the 1930 OTHS *Acorn* included: John J. and John D. Grussing Grain Co., Watkins Crossing and Royal; J. D. Cromwell, General Merchandise; Farmers State Bank; Hunter Lumber Co.; Illinois Terminal Railway; Fithian Hardware Co.; J. E. Mullins, Furniture and Livestock Hauling, Muncie; Ed Harden, Ford Dealer, David Meade, Salesman. The Ford ad notes, "Plenty of speed. 60 to 65 miles per hour. Plenty of Power for the deepest mud."

1931 Charles Smoot was killed in a tragic auto accident on the west Oakwood curve of Rt. 10. He was 52.

1932 New businesses appearing for the first time in the OTHS annual were; Jeanes Funeral Service, J. Jeanes, Director, Fithian, phone Main 1; E.R.C. Kyle, Editor, The Community News; Ralph McMorris, The Great American Value: Chevrolet

Sales and Service, Fithian; and Gulick Drug Co., Southeast corner, North and Vermilion Streets, Danville. For the first time, an attempt was made in the 1932 issue of the *Acorn* to list all previous graduates of OTHS by class, current address and occupation. The results contained 274 names in 15 classes ranging in size from 7 that first year of 1917 to 30 in the record class of 1926. Most of the classes ranged from 20 to 25 students, but the class of 1929 dropped precipitously in size. There were 21 in the class of 1928; only 9 in 1929, and 23 the following year. It is possible this was due to a second-generation effect of the smallpox epidemic of 1872, but a more likely cause was the WW I flu epidemic of 1918 when many families lost one or more members.

1933 A. E. "Art" Cromwell took over the operation of Cromwell's Grocery from his father, John D. Cromwell, who died July 13. Carl Wayne "Punk" Strong married Gladys Fosnaugh in LaPlace. On Saturday, June 10, tragedy struck once again at the ITR bridge over Stony Creek at OTHS. Harold Smoot, 14, was walking across the top of the bridge with Delbert Strong. Harold apparently started to lose his balance and waved his arms to regain it. But he touched the high-tension wire and was thrown from the bridge by the shock. He died later of electrical burns. The Bantz Building was destroyed by fire, and only great effort by bucket brigades saved the adjacent house on the north and Cromwell's Grocery on the south. The present Cromwell's Store, built much later, incorporates as its north wall one of the old Bantz Building walls.

1934 Rev. A. M. Willey becomes the M.E. pastor.

1935 O. E. Bantz was named Postmaster again on July 1. On August 1, he sold his Standard Oil service station on Rt. 10 to Merle E. Dunn. Don Albert Married Elizabeth Vinson. They were to have four children; Alan, Don, Jon and Jane. William C. Youmans died August 21. It was about 1935 that "Deke" Strong's poultry house burned. The Strongs then lived in Doc Cox's old house across from the Doney Building, at that time the Post Office, today Grimm's Restaurant. Bogus's lived in this house a few years later when it, too, burned.

1936 Roy Shelton was transferred back to Danville from Fithian by the Vermilion County Telephone Co.

1937 The story of the Thirties cannot be told without some mention of the amazing endurance, ingenuity and high humor with which people in small towns with little or no income managed not only to survive but to rear families, and incredible as it seems in 1970, to enjoy life. Pressures on unemployed family heads were enormous, tempers frayed, tables frequently were lightly laden and occasionally bare, pride and dignity bruised, but the untold acts of generous sharing and open-hearted heroism were manifold. Through loans and credit extended with little hope of repayment, through back-breaking labor in acres of subsistence gardens, through great fretting and worrying, and through simple, inexpensive and home-made entertainment, life was made bearable. Square-dances with Al Thomas fiddlin' and callers taking turns. Free Saturday night movies in the summer with scores of tin lizzies parked three and four deep the length of Main Street. The annual Harvest Festivals attended by thousands. The basketball games and euchre parties. The Halloween parties in the back of the Ford Garage. Probably at no other time in their history were the people of Fithian so closely welded into a community.

1938 Rev. J. R. Kesterson replaces Rev. Willey at the M.E. Church.

1939 At least three disastrous fires occurred in the late '30's. The house on the northwest corner of Clinton and Adams, across from "Pop" Randall's and Art Cromwell's (where Harlan Lee built the new house recently), Pascal J. Swaim's brick residence on the site of the old school at Washington and Adams, and later the frame garage on the Swaim property burned. Frank Doney was living in the garage at the time, and lost his life in the blaze. Partly as a result of these losses, a Volunteer Fire Department was organized. At first, the truck was kept in the back of the Standard Service Station garage on Rt. 10. Many years later the present concrete block building was constructed with volunteer labor on Washington Street. Watching these men in action is an impressive experience.

They have been timed at under three minutes from first sound of siren to hoses on-stream. They are fast, efficient and effective, and we are all fortunate to have them.

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Fithian War Effort

1940-1950 "Another War and its Aftermath"

"The economy perked up, but the nation plunged into the greatest war in history. At home, many people began to make money. Women couldn't buy nylon or silk stockings, so they painted their legs. Gas was rationed and so was meat, sugar, shoes and most everything else. Bobby-soxers swooned when Frank Sinatra sang at New York's Paramount Theater. Even Joe Palooka went to war and many a girl became "Rosie the Riveter." F.D.R. created Lend Lease to aid the Allies and solemnly complained that Republicans were criticizing "my little dog Fala." At home there were brown-outs, dim-outs, black-outs, air raid wardens and endless, anxious waiting for news. With history's first atomic bombing raids the war ended. And then came the great spy scares. We airlifted 2.3 million tons of

Farmer Shoots At 'Stump' and Bags Huge Eagle

When Frank Payne saw a "stump" start to fly out of a field on his farm near Fithian, he started to shoot! Result was the bagging of an American eagle with a wingspread of seven feet and two inches, shown above being held by Mr. Payne, right, his small son and Harold Izard, left. The Fithian farmer was walking across the field when he noticed a stump he never had seen there before. When he came nearer, the "stump" spread wings and started to fly toward him. He fired, thinking it was a huge hawk, and found it to be an eagle when he picked it up. (C-N Photo by Keith Plotner.)

food and coal to West Berlin to keep the Russians at bay. During the 40's *Oklahoma!, South Pacific* and *A Streetcar Named Desire* came to Broadway; *The Egg and I, Forever Amber, The Naked and The Dead* and *A Tree Grows In Brooklyn* hit the top of the best seller lists. Jackson Pollock was dripping his paint on canvas. In 1948, a fascinated nation (and its dismayed pollsters) watched as Harry S. Truman narrowly defeated Governor Thomas E. Dewey in TV's first presidential election. Other televised diversions included a hunk of

peroxided beefcake named Gorgeous George and the genteel ladies of the roller derby."

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1940 Most area towns followed the national trend during the thirties and lost population. Only Oakwood gained, up 18 to 555. Fithian lost 38, to 423. Muncie declined 22 to 200. The Township decreased 162 to 2,733. The Rev. Gordon B. White replaced Rev. Kesterson at the M.E. Church. Many will recall Rev. White, who anticipated by three decades today's joggers. He walked everywhere, even to make rural housecalls. He was a familiar sight, in his white summer suit pacing briskly down dusty gravel roads. Perhaps his annual salary of $1,200 had something to do with his passion for walking. September of this year marked the unification of Methodism. Earl Gritten died, and Vins and Merv became full-partners in the International Harvester distribution and repair business. After the war, the firm grew to the point where they eventually employed 15 people. Their role in the annual Harvest Festival was substantial – most of the rides were clever adaptations of an entire generation of Farmall tractors.

1942 Virgie Firebaugh died May 28, at the age of 62. In September, Frank Perry began service in the Post Office Department in New Caledonia. His wife, Ellen (Blew) Perry served as rural route carrier in his absence. On March 30 a meeting was held at the home of Mrs. Vinson (Wintress Douglas) Gritten to organize the Fithian Womans Club. Officers elected were President Wintress Gritten; Vice-President Esther Blackburn; Secretary Mrs. Lowell (Tempa Snider) Dalbey; and Treasurer Mrs. Charles (Helen) Davis. For their first project they chose to bake cookies for the Soldiers and Sailors Club and to collect waste kitchen fats and old papers for the war effort.

1944 Under the leadership of Rev. and Mrs. Harold D. (Julia Hendricks) Bedinger, the Nazarene Church purchased its first parsonage, the second house south of the Standard Oil service station.

1945 Susie Elva Walters (Mrs. Charles) Smoot died June 21 at the age of 55. Her daughter, Mr. Paul (Virginia Smoot) Loeffler, has a V-Mail letter sent to Susie from Europe shortly before her death by Dr. E. F. Dietrich to cheer his former patient (and, indeed, former landlady) during her illness. Dr. Dietrich had come to Fithian in the early thirties, and he started practice in Dr. Fithian's old office, then the home of Mrs. Smoot. Later, he moved his office to the old bank building, presently the Post Office. Rev. Peterson was called to the Methodist pulpit at a salary of $1,700. Dozens of area residents returned from WW-II, among them Frank Perry, who was discharged in December at Ft. Wayne, Indiana. And there were some who did not return. For many years a large Service Roll was maintained, first across Main Street from the Grain Office and later where the flag pole now stands, listing all who served, and with stars next to the names of those who gave the supreme sacrifice.

1946 Mrs. Ruth Sartain was appointed Acting Postmistress December 1. She had been a clerk under Postmaster O. E. Bantz since July, 1937. Mrs. Sartain was appointed Postmistress in March 1949. The Rev. V. H. VanHorn came to the Methodist Church. Six school districts were consolidated into Fithian School District No. 125; Fithian, Biddle, Little Giant, Black, Gorman and Central.

1947 Rev. H. F. Halfyard became the Methodist pastor. Frank Miles moved to Fithian from Farmer City. George Schingel commenced work as an electrician on the University of Illinois staff. As nearly as can be determined, George was the second or third person to commute from Fithian to work in Danville or Champaign. Sanford "Sanny" Meade was unquestionably the first, as he rode the interurban from Fithian to his post as County Clerk in the Danville courthouse. Floyd Nieman, who worked under Sanny, may have been the second or third to commute. These isolated instances assume more significance than might at first glance, be apparent. They were harbingers of the future. The role and function of Fithian was changing,

Church Carnival

just as the war changed the faces of all communities. What had been a relatively independent and self-contained economic unit was becoming a bedroom wing to nearby urban centers of commerce and manufacturing. Heretofor, people had lived and worked and devised their own entertainments on the farm or in Fithian. Now, they were beginning to look to Danville and Champaign for jobs, markets for both buying and selling, and to movies, clubs, labor unions and even churches and schools for after-hours culture. First, the radio, then (and most importantly) the automobile, and later television opened entire new worlds to all the Fithians in the country. From Harry "Mac's" first home-built radio about 1920 to his first TV set about 1950, the forces of change were accelerating, and WW-II was the stimulus that suddenly woke everyone up to the realization of those cumulative changes. The years from 1947 to about 1950 were the last and peak years of Fithian's life as an independent and genuine community in the old sense of that word. The list of local businesses advertised in the OTHS annual reflect this. At no other period were they so

numerous or so prosperous. The 26 in 1947 included: Jenkin's Service Station; Dr. C. A. Cox, V.M.D.; Ed Williams Welding Shop; D. B. Cole, Custom Trucking; Frank Blew, Carpenter-Contractor; Cromwell's Store; Harold Izard, Fithian Grain Co.; Gones Cafe; Alfred Dunn, Insurance-Real Estate; Hunter Lumber and Coal Co.; Van Rice, Ice-Ice Cream Salt-Milk-Soft Drinks; Jas. A. Chisler, Feed Store; Mart Watkins, Service Station; Cal Bishop, Upholstering; O. J. Michener, Custom Trucking; Tony Imperio, Barber; C. S. Cunningham, General Hauling; Lem Sartain; O. E. Bantz, Insurance; Hi-View Farms, W. Glen Myers and Irvin W. Myers; Emmerson Jenkins Shoe Shop. Honor Tutwiler, D-X Service Station; Gritten Hardware Co. and Household Appliances; Ed Harden, Ford Sales and G. E. Home Appliances; and Gerald Meade, Standard Oil Agent. The 1966 *Acorn* listed only two. The times, they were, indeed, a-changing.

1948 Julia Osborn Scott, widow of Max, married Lewis Duke on November 16. Mrs. Duke and many others recall with fond memories the old-time picnics on the Fourth of July in Dalbey's Woods. "Lev" Jenkins died, and his daughter, Mrs. Charles (Mary Elizabeth Jenkins) Darr and family moved to the Boorde farm. Mrs. Minnie Jenkins moved to the house on Main Street two doors south of the school. The 1948 Oakwood Township plat reflects the following prominent landholders in the Fithian area:

E. L. Dalbey
N. Meade
V. Loeffler
N. & M.E. Watkins
Springhill Cemetery
Marietta Tawney
Chas. Busey
Louise Huls
Wm. Wilson
Eliz. Rickman
Vera Moorhouse
Henry Chesnut
J. T. Collins

Albert Shepherd
Nora Huckins
L. V. Smoot
Myrl Harry
ice Patterson
Guy A Towney
Geo. Davis
Leo Freese
O. T. VanWinkle
M. C. Stewart
W. J. Hiller
J. F. Arnold
Hazel Myers

Clara Plotner
C. Smoot
W. Harnew
J. Boorde & Mabel Harris
Knight Brothers
Lilian Johnson
M. Watkins & M. Reeves
H. C. & Nora Watkins
M. & L. Dalbey
Hazel Hodgsen
John Tudor
Mrs. G. Pulliam
L. G. VanBuskirk

Nannie Youmans	Mrs. W. F. Smith	Sanford Kreager
Ed Harper	Sardis Clapp	Ed Fagaly
Clint Harry	Joe Morehouse	P. J. Swaim
Earl Ca	Nhas. Crouch	Guy Hobick
Geo Harper	Jasper Huls	Hugh Williams
Harm Loschen	C. & Leone Trimble	Glen E. Myers
Ge. W. LeFever	Wm. Case	W. Penfield
Katherine Bandy	Marjorie Kelly	Nellie LeSeur
L. Zigler	Dale Firebaugh	V. E. Miller
Frank Rademaker	Glen Illk	Elora Cannon
R. H. McAllister	W. Watson	S. Littler
Mrs. Susie Watson	L. E. Jenkins	R. R. Bantz
Ed. Farmer	P. E. Stevens	L. H. Duke
Geo. L. Knapp	C. A. Ludwig	Chas. Shutt
J. Perring	Linley Hudson	W. Barnes
Eliz. Swengel	Cunningham Home	Mrs. Effie Conkey
John R. Sadler	Goldie Harry	Edna Jenkins
C. E. Womakcs	Lyman Johnson	Anna Scott
E. L. Otis	Edith Fielding	Sarah Harris
Ray Davis	Sherman Cass	L. Hendricks
I. T. Bridges	A. Pruitt	C. Madden

1949 Rev. W. H. Loyd assumed the Methodist pulpit. Dr. and Mrs. O. W. Michael celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary December 31. Raymond and Elaine VanBuskirk moved into the VanBuskirk homestead. Citizenship awards were presented for the first time to Fithian school children by the Womans Club. Mrs. C. A. (Nina) Cox was president.

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1950-1960 "The Age of Space"

"The Cold War settled in. We fought in Korea and General Douglas MacArthur was relieved of his command. We moved a step further into the atomic age with a hydrogen bomb test on Eniwetok atoll, launched the first nuclear sub and our first earth satellite, and many Americans built backyard bomb shelters stocked with everything from the works of Shakespear to cases of Scotch. Television settled comfortably into the living rooms of the nation. Kids were entranced by the *Mickey Mouse Club,* Uncle Miltie and Howdy Doody, and the nation blossomed with millions of Davy Crockett coonskin caps.

Gritten's Hardware 1950's

Marilyn Monroe and Elvis Presley caused hearts to flutter and pulses to race. Servantless families cooked casserole suppers and women wore bikinis. People were reading *The Caine Mutiny, The Power of Positive Thinking, Doctor Zhivago* and *The Silver Chalice.* Alaska and Hawaii became the 49th and 50th states. The Supreme Court ruled public school segregation unconstitutional, and Eisenhower defeated Stevenson handily in two elections. We saw U.F.O's, watched 3-D movies and searched, with no success, for Bridey Murphy. Robbers stole $2.8 million from the Brink's company in Boston. And America lived through 10 years of the greatest boom in her history."

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1950 Once again the U.S. Census revealed that in all the township only Oakwood, closest to Danville, was growing. Fithian decreased 9 to 414; Muncie lost 3 to 197; the township declined 248 to 2,485; but Oakwood grew by 86 to 641.

Other signs of change were not hard to find in this mid-century period. "Old 1200" made its last run on the ITR tracks April 26. (This may have occurred anywhere from 1946 to 1951, but probably was in 1951.) As Arthad ridden on the first one in 1903, so Arnold Cromwell and Sharon and Gary were on board for the last run of "Old 1200". The old tracks were needed for steel to feed the pent-up consumer demands of a war- and ration-weary people. It is ironic that the commuter lines were abandoned at just the moment when small-town people everywhere were beginning to center their lives around commuting. But the automobile had changed the lives of everyone, and, in those happy pre-pollution and pre-traffic-jam days, it promised everything to everyone. Another sign of change in Fithian was the advent of television. Harry "Mac" McAllister had the first radio set in town back about 1920, and it was about 1950 when "Mac" got the first TV set in town. Probably the second set was the one in Gene Harden's Restaurant in the old Bank Building, currently the Post Office. Other signs of change included Rev. Loyd's salary increase at the Methodist Church to $2,800. And Ed Harden, for 36 years a Ford dealer in the same place, sold his business to Roy and Halma (Harden) Stallings.

1951 The Rev. W. W. Harding accepted the call to the Methodist pulpit. The August, 1951, *Church Messenger* has photographs of all the classes and lists of the 149 active members (as defined by the 1948 *Discipline*, Par. 126), 16 non-resident members and 62 inactive members, making a total of 227. Under the leadership of Rev. Gordon Rice, the Nazarene Church constructed a new education wing to the south of the existing sanctuary. With the construction of the Roy Stallings residence, a new subdivision began on the east edge of town, south of Rt. 150. Roy Shelton retired from the Vermilion County Telephone Co. City water came to Fithian.

1952 Rev. W. L. Gustin, Gerry and Lindel, accept the Methodist charge in Fithian, The Gustins, coming exactly 50 years after the Gillmores, share with them the record of tenure. Each

remained six years.

1953 Dr. O. W. Michael died November 14. For 37 years he had been president of the OTHS school board since its first year, 1916. H. Carl "Bunt" Watkins died January 21. Under the primary impetus and leadership of board President Merv Gritten, school district voters approved a referendum for a $220,000 bond issue to finance the construction of a new educational physical plant.

1954 Contracts for the construction of the new school building were let March 31, and work began May 12. The new structure was built immediately west of the old building, which remained in use all the while. Jeane's Funeral Home was built just south of Haynes Station in the vacant lot where the free shows formerly were held; the free shows were moved to the lot on the west side of the street where the future community building is to be located.

1955 The cafeteria portion of the new school was completed and the hot lunch program started January 10. Classes moved into the new structure February 18, and it was officially completed May. 1 Dedication ceremonies were held Sunday, May 22. Final cost was $230,000. The old two-story school, built in 1880, was demolished by L. L. Lenover Co., Danville. The new school had a student body of 135 in eight grades. Two buses crisscrossed daily a real estate valuation for tax purposes of $4.6 million. Members of the board were President Mervin Gritten, Elmer Hobick, Paul Loeffler, Wendell Miller, Walter E. Barnes, Gerald D. Meade, Keith Jones and Secretary Homer Myers, Jr. In the face of substantial opposition to the new school, these men, in a better position than most area residents to appreciate the need, immeasurable time and effort toward securing what has long since been recognized as an indispensable asset to the area. Rev. W. L. Gustin, Methodist pastor, received a salary boost to $3,500. Minnie Gritten and Archie Haynes died. In August, theorized lightning set off a dust explosion in OTHS destroying the main building; only the new industrial shop building and the gymnasium remained.

1956 About this time, either 1956 or '57, the last remaining wooden covered bridge in east-central Illinois and one of the oldest structures in Oakwood Township was destroyed by fire. The Luker Pan-O-Cake business began in part of the old Gritten Hardware Building, baking angel food cakes.

1958 Rev. L. Eugene McCormick was appointed pastor of the Methodist Church. Vinson Gritten sold his half of the International Harvester Business to his brother Mervin. Don Albert became township highway commissioner. Frank Perry became ill, and his wife, Ellen, served as substitute rural route carrier in his absence.

1959 Construction began on the new Fithian Elevator north of the tracks on Main Street, with Harold Izard as owner-manager. The structure can be seen for miles and stands as a landmark of the town.

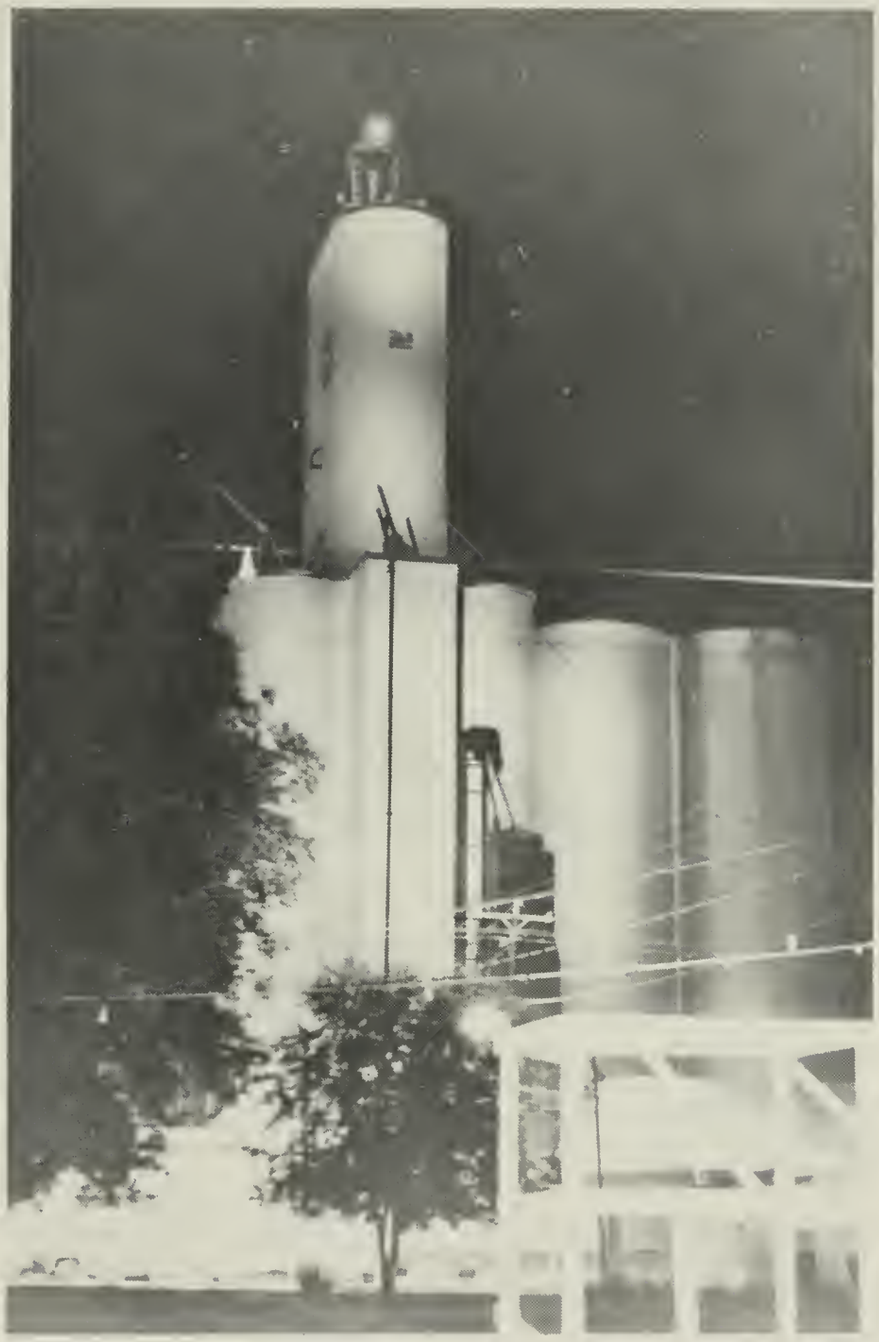
* * * * *

1960-1970 "Do Your Own Thing"

"John F. Kennedy promised the country "the moon" by 1970, and Collins, Aldrin and Armstrong beat the deadline. It was a confusing decade marked by urban disorders, dissent over the Vietnam War and three shocking assassinations. Other (less traumatic) shocks: Joe Willie Namath lead the Jets to an upset victory over the Baltimore Colts, a stunning triumph for the A.F.L.; the Mets climbed out of their celler to pinnacles unimagined; minis, too, went up, up and away. The Hippies did their own thing. The country went all the way with L.B.J. in '64, then suddenly, in '68 Nixon was the one. *Laugh-In* busily socked it to a delighted audience; Tiny Tim "Tiptoed Through the Tulips"; Woodstock and *Hair* happened; and concerned citizens began thinking serious thoughts about pollution and the population explosion."

* * * * * *

1960 The population explosion reached Oakwood Township and Fithian, reversing three decades of declining population. Fithian was reported in the U.S. Census to have gained 81 persons to a 1960 total of 495; Oakwood really exploded; up



Elevator

220 to 861; Muncie remained relatively stable; down 2 to 195; the township increased 253 to 2,738. The Fithian population explosion was reflected in the beginning of a new subdivision on the Gil Gaston property at the east edge of town, north of Rt. 150. Interstate 74 north of Fithian opened to traffic with the nearest exit west of Fithian on Route 49. Charles Plotner died October 26 at age 79. Death also claimed Frank Perry. Ellen, who had driven the mail route in his stead during his illness, completed the last two years of a 40-year career in the

Post Office Department. Rev. Oscar F. Jones succeeded Rev. McCormick in the Methodist pulpit. Rev. McCormick was receiving $4,500 when he left the local charge.

1961 Ground was broken Sunday, November 19, for the new Nazarene sanctuary. Merv Gritten sold the Hardware and Implement Business, closing out 37 years of continuous operation. Gritten's old hardware store burned, destroying the building completely and threatening the entire business district. St. Joseph, Ogden, and Danville No. 5 Fire Departments were called to fight the fire. John Ross Boorde died August 3. Rev. Jones, Methodist pastor, received $3,750 for the 1960-61 year. He was succeeded by Rev. Robert D. Williams.

1962 The new sanctuary of the Nazarene Church was dedicated September 30. Methodist pastor Rev. Williams received $4,000 annual salary.

1963 Edwin G. "Ed" Harden, Ford dealer in the same place for 36 years when he retired in 1950, died after a long illness. He left his widow, Ruth, 13 children and numerous grandchildren. The Fithian Methodist Church celebrated its 92nd anniversary June 2. Membership in 1963 stood at 250. There had been 47 pastors in those 92 years. Rev. Hendry was receiving a salary at the time of $4,000.

Fifteen members were honored for 50-year memberships:

Mrs. Myrtle Meade, Danville –April 8, 1900
Miss Nora Watkins, Fithian, RFD – 1900
Miss Sadie Watkins, Urbana – September 4, 1900
Mrs. Cora Hampton, Fithian – December 17, 1905
Mrs. Iva Cushwa, Fithian – March 29, 1908
Mrs. Gladys Elliott, Champaign – July 12, 1908
Mrs. Julia Covert, Danville – July 12, 1908
Mrs. Lola Jenkins, Fithian – July 12, 1908
Mrs. Murza Rutan, Fithian, RFD – July 12, 1908
Mr. L. Dwight Watkins, Fithian – July 12, 1908
Mr. Floyd Nieman, Fithian – July 24, 1908
Mr. T. Ace Payne, Fithian – July 24, 1908
Mr. Charles Thompson, Fithian – July 24, 1908
Mrs. Susie Watson, Danville – July 24, 1908
Mrs. Lenore Payne, Fithian – July 31, 1910

Haynes Marathon

1964 Rev. Hendry, Methodist pastor, received a salary of $4,500.

1965 The Gilford Gaston residence was destroyed by fire in -14 degree weather on the same night as the Fire House Santa Clause party. Vermilion County Civil Defense, Fairmount, and Catlin Fire Departments fought the blaze. Ice was chipped from the clothes of the firemen so that they might drink coffee. Rev. Hendry received a salary increase of $200.

1966 The Village of Fithian sold their power franchise to Illinois Power just six weeks before the January 26, 1967 ice storm. It is to be paid for over a 20-year period. Mrs. Ben (Cora Messenger) Russell died.

1967 On January 26, the ice storm hit Fithian causing a loss of power for about 5 days. The WICD tower, southwest of Fithian, while under construction, fell due to the heavy load of ice. At this time the tower was the tallest structure in Illinois. In late January Rev. Robert Merritt assumed leadership of the Fithian and Batestown Methodist Churches. The parsonage became a center of activity as the 7 Merritt children

became a part of school and community events. Harry "Mac" McAllister died August 8.

1968 Under the leadership of Rev. Thomas Weller, the Nazarene congregation constructed a new parsonage in the summer on Cherry Drive.

1969 The new Nazarene parsonage was dedicated December 8.

Fithian 1970

1970 Rev. Gerald Vaught assumes leadership of the Nazarene congregation. Rev. Joe Martin came to the Fithian United Methodist Church to assume duties of minister, as Rev. Merritt left for a new charge in Massachusetts. Mrs. Verne (Doris L. Fisher) Mayhew died August 18. A town meeting was held in March in the school gymnasium to discuss the question of how the village might appropriately celebrate its one-hundredth year. Tom Perry was elected chairman of the Centennial Committee, and an increasingly busy schedule of meetings materialized in the ensuing months. A few weeks after helping neighboring Ogden celebrate their centennial, the Fithian

Centennial Celebration was held September 11-13. The order of events, committees, and award winners are listed elsewhere. A benefit supper was held Saturday night, November 21, in the school gymnasium for Matthew Perry, son of David and Tonda (Brinegar) Perry. Photographs, slides and movies of the September 11-13 Centennial Celebration were shown. Don Albert, township highway commissioner for twelve years, died November 17. Death also claimed Rose Elle (Cronkhite) Haynes, honored at the Centennial Celebration as the oldest continuous resident of the area (95) years), on October 26; Clyde L. Meade, brother to Mrs. Howard (Mary Meade) King, on October 12; and Carl Wayne "Punk" Strong, brother to Delbert and son of Cora Hampton, on October 7.

* * * * * * * *

Dedicated to
The Rev. Robert Merritt Family
by their Fithian friends

DO YOU REMEMBER?

Joe Green, the Negro who stayed in the room on the west side of the old livery stable?

The old Negro couple who lived in the two-room house in the west end of town. He worked on the hardroad.

The old Big Four Depot on the *east* side of Main Street?

When the Lysander Smoot-Carl Watkins-Paul Sharpf house sat on the corner where the old interurban station is now?

How hectic it used to be in Emmerson Jenkins' shop at harvest time repairing combine canvases?

Plotner's Bakery on the corner?

The Howard Riley or the Weaver Bakery before that?

When the following had restaurants in Fithian: the Wades, Paul Busch, Jack Cavanaugh, Al Sweitzer?

The medicine shows, basketball games, plays and dances above the Bantz Building?

When Orville Yunt, or Mr. Selzer, or Mr. Bert, or Mrs. Nace, or Bob Wade, or Russ Headley were Big Four ticket agents?

When Mr. Foster, or "Pop" Randall, or "Tab" Shreeves, or Ralph Day were ITR ticket agents?

The Bristol Blacksmith Shop across from the bank?

"Daddy" Lee built the lumber yard?

"Bush" Stump when he worked for Tom and Earl Gritten on the corn sheller and threshing rigs?

Mr. West built the old Knight residence?

When "Uncle Bert" used to whitewash houses?

The burro he used to ride?

When Frank Henry had the grist mill in the west end of town?

The butcher shop in the two-room building south of Jim Hargan's house?

When the old Fithian Farm was known as the "Rattlesnake Farm"?

Mr. Hunter had a blacksmith shop in the long garage behind Ida Lumen's house?

When Pete Smith, the Nazarene minister, lived in Emory Roberts'

place and had the religious verse painted on the side of his barn? Remember, he had an apple orchard, and if you wanted an apple, you'd better be able to sound off with the memorized verse? Do you remember the verse? "Oh, where shall you spend eternity? Prepare to meet thy Lord. Be sure your sins will find you out. Follow all men in Holiness, for which you shall then see the Lord."

The names of the work-horse teams on the Watkins' farm?

Dave and Jim; Buck and Jerry; Dick and Maude.

The Kensil Harness Shop on Main Street across from the elevator?

When "Grandpa" Blacker or Mary, wife of Ben Meade, were psychic and would make tables bounce?

When many of the people you knew had never been beyond Potomac, Fairmount, Champaign and Danville?

When women had to sneak downtown early in the morning to get their hair "bobbed", using alleys so they would not be seen?

The quartet that "Code" Hampton sang in at graduations, weddings and funerals?

The group of local temperance ladies marching militantly (a la Carrie B. Nation) down to the saloon kitty-corner from the elevator?

The old billygoat the Modern Woodsmen used to ride after their meetings in the IOOF Building?

"Nute" Draper's lead when the Woodsmen sang "Illinois" at the beginning of each meeting?

"Highpockets" Henry's cement block plant?

When these were busy towns: Pelville, Blue Grass, Marysville, Gilbert, Meyersville, S. Mark, Higginsville, Blue Mound, Archie, Himrod, Reilly, Gerald, Heaton, McKendree, Denmark, Watkins' Glen, Unionville, Midway, Steelton, Humrick, Maplewood Park, O'Connelville, Dallas or Chillecothe? They were all in Vermilion County.

The Danville *Plain Dealer, News, Times* or *The Messenger*?

How many of these Fithian area residents, past and present, can you identify?

Ace
Arkie
Beanie
Beaner
Belcie
Benny
Birdlegs
Blimp
Buck
Bud
Bunt
Bus
Bush
Butch
Buttercup
Buz
Cal
Catfish
Chessy
Chevy
Chew
Ching
Code
Coop
Corky
Cot
Crackin Good
Creep
Curley
Cush
Daddy
Date
Deanie
Deke
Dick
Dicker
Dike
Dip
Doad
Doc
Donald Duck
Doster
Dot
Duck
Ducky
Dugan
Duke
Dumpy
Dutch
Eagle Eye
Eddy Freddy
Fat
Ferd
Franky
Frayny
Fuzzy
Gabby
Gee Haw
Gerty
Gilley
Grandpa
Grubby
Gussy
Ham
Hank
Harry Mac
Hattie
Heck
Hee Haw Pete
Hi
Highpockets
Hoaxy
Hoot
Ike
Izzy
Jabberneck
Jake
J.D.
Jiggs
Jinks
Jinky
Jody
June
Leck
Lem
Liz
Lula
Lulu
Lute
Ma
Mack
Mart
Matt
Maynard
Meatball
Mike
Moss
Mumbo
Nanny
Nate
Neanie
Shep
Sherm
Newt
Nute
Ogie
Pat
P.D.
P.E.
P.J.
Peaky
Peanuts
Peck
Peewee
Peg
Pete
Pinky
Pokey
Polock
Pooch
Porkchop
Props
Pudge
Pug
Punk
Punch Board
Red
Reece
Robbie
Rocky
Runt
Rusty
Sadie
Sanny
Sawbuck
Scottie
Sherm
Shiner
Shug
Sicafoose
Skeeter
Skiggs
Skinny
Sleepy
Slim
Slug
Smiley
Sonny
Spider
Spud
Squeek
String
Stub
Sully
Sy
Syb
Tab
Tally
Thea
Tip
Toady
Toots
Trinnie
Tubby
Uncle
Wes
Willy
Win
Windy
Yak Yak

FITHIAN
CENTENNIAL COMMITTEES

Chairman ..... Tom Perry
Treasurer ..... Rene Raaum
Secretary ..... Bernice Topol

COMMITTEES

Recreation ..... Judy Stallings, Fithian Woman's Club
Parade ..... Mary Anderegg
Teen Dance ..... Mary Anderegg
Square Dance ..... Mary Elizabeth Darr
Centennial Wagon ..... Marion Cannon and Dean Cannon
Centennial Book ..... Dick Cannon
Centennial Book Illustrations ..... Jody Payne
Antique Display, Fire Station .. Parent-Teachers Committee, Bernice Topol, Chairman, Mabel Renfro
Antique Display, Kirby's ..... Thelma Williams

Poodle Show & Pet Parade ..... Danville Kennel Club, Louise Johnsen
King & Queen Contest ..... Mary Anderegg
Garden Tractor Pull ..... Talmadge Penrod
Publicity ..... Juanita Penrod and Mae Watkins
Food Tent ..... Women's Society of Christian Service Mrs. Paul Jolley, President
Beard Judging, Oldest Residents, Dress Contest .. Mary Beth Cannon and Sara Laker
Centennial Drawing ..... Ray Wagers
Centennial Supplies..... Mary Anderegg, Mabel Renfro, and Bernice Topol
Centennial Plates ..... Rene Raaum and Cindy Perry
Flea Market ..... Perry Dean Blew
Pit Barbeque ..... Dean Cannon and Gerald Barnes
Medallions ... Tom Perry, Don Stallings, and Raymond Van Buskirk
Old Pictures ..... Mabel Renfro

1870 – FITHIAN CENTENNIAL – 1970

Square Dance
Fri. Nite!

Come Join us!
Sept. 11 - 12

Stage Coach
Fun!!

Friday, Sept. 11

5:00 P.M.	Fish supper, Buried-beef sandwiches, Salads, Dessert, Drinks all day
6:00 P.M.	Dedication with Sen. Tom Merritt
6:30 P.M.	Centennial Parade - over 50 units
8:00 P.M.	Square Dance - live music with Farmer Stultz
10:00 P.M.	Crowning of Centennial King and Queen

Saturday, Sept. 12

10:00 A.M.	Weigh-in at elevator for garden tractor pull
12:00 NOON	Food-serving Buried-beef and variety of sandwiches, home-made pie, drinks all day
1:00 P.M.	Garden tractor pull - Games and Rides open
2:00 P.M.	Poodle show and Pet parade
3:30 P.M.	Display of antiques and furniture auction
5:00 P.M.	Chicken supper, sandwiches, etc.
6:00 P.M.	Entertainment on stage - Beard and Dress judging
8:00 P.M.	Teen Dance
10:00 P.M.	Drawing of Grand Prizes - 15 additional prizes

Beard & Dress
Judging!!

Antique &
History
Museum!!

Buried-beef &
Home-made
pie
both days!!

Centennial Plates,
Coins & Books
on sale!!

IN MEMORIAM – FRANK PERRY

Frank returned from France after serving in World War I in late 1919, coming to Fithian from Rankin, Illinois. Early in 1920, he took the examination for Rural Route No. 2. He received the appointment and assumed his duties in June of that year. Frank served as a rural route carrier under four postmasters: Frank Doney, Simon Lark, Oscar Bantz, and Ruth Sartain.

Delivering mail in the old days by horseback on wintry, unploughed rural roads leant real meaning to the Post Office Department's famous motto, "Neither wind nor rain nor sleet nor snow shall keep these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds." Henry Ford's Model T helped matters some, but not much really.

In September, 1942, Frank enlisted and served in World War II in New Caledonia in the Post Office Department from January, 1943, until he returned to the United States in April, 1945. He was discharged December 1st, 1945, from Ft. Wayne, Detroit, Michigan. His wife, Ellen (Blew) Perry served as temporary substitute carrier during this period.

They had four children: John C., who is a major in the U.S. Air Force stationed at Tacoma, Washington; Jo Ellyn White, who graduated from Lakeview School of Nursing and is now living in Champaign, Illinois; Thomas, living in the homeplace and a field superintendent with Tibco of Illinois; and David, a technician with the Department of Chemical Engineering at the University of Illinois.

Once again, due to his failing health, Ellen substituted for Frank the last two years he lived, completing forty years service. He passed away in January, 1960.

The Perry Family

FITHIAN WOMAN'S CLUB

On March 30, 1943, a group of women met at the home of Mrs. Wintress Gritten to organize a Woman's Club. Mrs. Gritten was appointed chairman and discussion was presented; thus the club was organized for a social evening with a constructive program.

The first elected officers were:

President . . . . . Wintress Gritten
Vice-President . . . . . .Esther Blackburn
Secretary . . . . . Tempa Dalbey
Treasurer . . . . . Helen Davis

One of the projects for this first year was to make cookies for the Soldiers and Sailors Club, and to collect waste kitchen fats and old papers for the war effort.

The second president of the club was Mrs. Esther Blackburn, who presented to the club a scrapbook to keep permanent records of the activities. The club sponsored a supervised summer playground project for the grade school children, but due to a whooping cough epidemic it was closed earlier than planned.

Mrs. Nina Cox was installed as the third president. Twenty-five dollars was donated toward the redecoration of the chapel at the Veterans Hospital in Danville, Illinois. The first school tea was sponsored and greatly appreciated by the teachers, students, and parents. Citizenship awards were presented for the first time in the spring of 1949.

The fourth president was Mrs. Ruth Stephens. This was still war time, and the club sent a box to a serviceman overseas for Christmas.

The club elected Virginia Loeffler as their fifth president. The tenth anniversary of the club, the highlight of the year, was held in the Coach and Cherubs in Champaign. A skit of past events was presented in comedy, and past-presidents pins were presented.

The sixth president, Mrs. Nora Huckin, was installed. Community interest at this time was the promotion of a new grade school building. Club members contributed to the choir robes for the Veterans Chapel and purchased a gift for the conference room at the new grade school in memory of Mrs. Nina Cox.

Mrs. Ruth Gritten was installed as the seventh president. This year the club donated $10 to the P.T.A. to sponsor a Halloween party and also helped in the summer recreation program. A Metronome was presented to the Fithian Grade School music department in memory of Mrs. Ruth Stephens.

Mrs. Helen Davis was elected as eighth president. Four unframed paintings were presented to the school, and the annual musical program was combined with the first art exhibit. The club contributed a Christmas box to the boys on the high seas.

The ninth president elected was Mrs. Lois Wright. During her term the club sponsored the Spring Musical Festival presented by the grade school band.

Mrs. Tempa Dalbey was installed as the tenth president of the club. The club placed two litter cans on the Fithian Main street, and a scholarship to be shared by two music camp students was awarded.

The next president of the Woman's Club was Maenette Schingel.

Mrs. Kay Miller was installed as the twelfth president. The club had a carry-in supper at the grade school for the Gaston family, whose home was destroyed by fire.

The thirteenth president, Mrs. Barbara Jones, had presided several times before her formal installation. The tour of the University of Illinois Union building and Krannert Art Museum was very interesting.

Mrs. Anita Gaston was installed as the fourteenth president of the club. The club elected to give a Danville Junior College scholarship to an Oakwood Township High School graduate. During this time the club also sponsored an art contest along with the annual school tea.

Mrs. Lorena Barnes was just installed as our fifteenth president this past spring. We are looking forward to an enriching two years during her term. This past spring the Woman's Club was responsible for having the town name painted on the water tower.

"HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS. . ."

The following was taken from "First Church of the Nazarene, Fithian, Illinois, DEDICATION SERVICE, September 30, 1962, 2:30 p.m." program phamplet, courtesy of Mrs. Clarence Wisecup and Rev. Gerald Vaught.

Fithian Church (of the Nazarene) was organized in 1912 with eight charter members. The first efforts toward establishing a work here were made by Rev. Taylor and Rev. Jackson when they held a tent meeting in 1910, on the Pete Smith property. In 1911 Mr. and Mrs. William Cannon gave a lot for the church building. During 1912, after the organization of the Church and under the leadership of Rev. Rolla C. Morgan, the present cement building was erected and dedicated. . . The church parsonage was purchased August 24, 1944 during the pastorate of Rev. Harold D. Bedinger. An education unit was constructed in 1951, under the supervision of Rev. Gordon Rice, pastor. Ground was broke (sic) for the new Sanctuary the Sunday afternoon of November 19, 1961."

(Handwritten appendix to above): After twenty-four years - during the summer of 1968 - a new parsonage was erected on Cherry Drive which was dedicated December 8, 1969. This was under the leadership of Rev. Thomas Weller. Present pastor of the church is Rev. Gerald Vaught.

Fithian Gun Club

Located on Archie Klaxton Farm
1½ miles south of Muncie, Illinois
Including 1961-1963

Incorporated by Wendell Wright
President Russell Grimm
Sec.-Treasurer Arnold Cromwell

MEMBERS

Harold Izard – Honorary
Wendell Wright – Honorary
Perry Dean Blew
Ted Brinegar
Arnold Cromwell
Herschel Davis
Charles Darr
Dennis Duden
John Fagaly
Gilford Gaston
Arthur Grimm
Russell Grimm
Joseph Gulick
Tom Gulick
Ralph Kent
Jim McMahon
Gerald Meade
Lawrence Moore
John Sadler
Glen Sperry
John Swan
Russell White

AFTERWARD

A Fithian enters its second century, the moment of celebration and remembrance affords a convenient vantage point from which to survey what has been wrought here on the prairie by our ancestors. The problems they faced and the battles they fought had to do with want and scarcity, with all the marshalled forces of wind and water, disease and drought, and with the patient accumulation of human resources, social, economic, political and technological, to solve those problems and win those battles. This moment also affords a unique turning point from which to reconnoiter not only whither we tend, but, indeed, what our tools for getting there may be. One of the pivotal insights of 1970 has been the belated recognition that many of the gadgets in our workshop we thought were tools are turning out to be weapons capable of destroying not only the vitality of the soil which nurtures us but our institutions, our social amenities, and ultimately, ourselves. For our community under the big sky of the open prairie, it is perhaps wistful to see the role and function of our town changing. As late as 1950 we were a relatively independent, self-contained economic unit exchanging with the world at large only in a few broad channels, primarily in grain and groceries, the products of our labor and our thought. But the demands of the coming century force outward our concept of community, and we see now that it must embrace the entire planet and the space around it, even to the moon. The challenge facing us is no way less noble, nor is it less demanding, than that faced so courageously and confidently by those who have gone. The problems of control – of population, pollution and conflict – and the problems of distribution – of how and to whom our abundance shall be apportioned – are every bit as challenging and demanding as were those problems of scarcity and want to our ancestors. "It was the best of times; it was the worst of times. . ." And so, in the double sense of that magnificent phrase, "Once upon a time. . ." just so are these times.

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Acknowledgement is made to the editors of Time-Life Books for some of the material describing national events by decade from their series, *This Fabulous Century.*

In addition, and of more importance than any published source, numerous old letters, documents, photographs, sale bills, advertisements, grave stones, newspaper clippings, graduation programs, church bulletins, club membership rosters and records, etc. were examined. And, of course, most important of all, the dozens and dozens of interviews, some recorded in handwriting and some by tape, graciously granted to a number of devoted and hard-working assistants by life-long Fithian residents, from 70 to 95 years of age, proved to be the primary source of information.

SPONSORS

Mr. and Mrs. Gerald W. Barnes, Chad and Teresa
The Cannons: Dean, Beth, Brad, and Brian
Mr. and Mrs. Henry Chesnut
Mr. and Mrs. Loren Chesnut
Edwin F. Dietrich, M. D.
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